

SEPTEMBER 1910

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THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

Frederick Yocum

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Beginning a new novel by

HALLIE ERMINIE RIVES
Author of "Hearts Courageous" and "Satan Sanderson"



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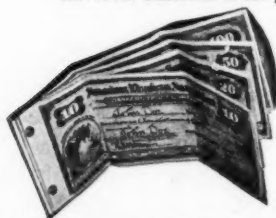
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ADVERTISING FORMS close three weeks prior to the time of issue. Advertising rates on application.

THE RED BOOK CORPORATION, Publisher, North American Building, CHICAGO

LOUIS ECKSTEIN, President

CHARLES M. RICHTER, Business Manager

RALPH K. STRASSMAN, Advertising Manager, 1172 Fifth Avenue Building, New York.

R. M. PURVES, New England Representative, 201 Devonshire St., Boston. LONDON OFFICES, 5 Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C.
Entered as second-class matter April 25, 1905, at the postoffice at Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of Congress of March 3, 1879.



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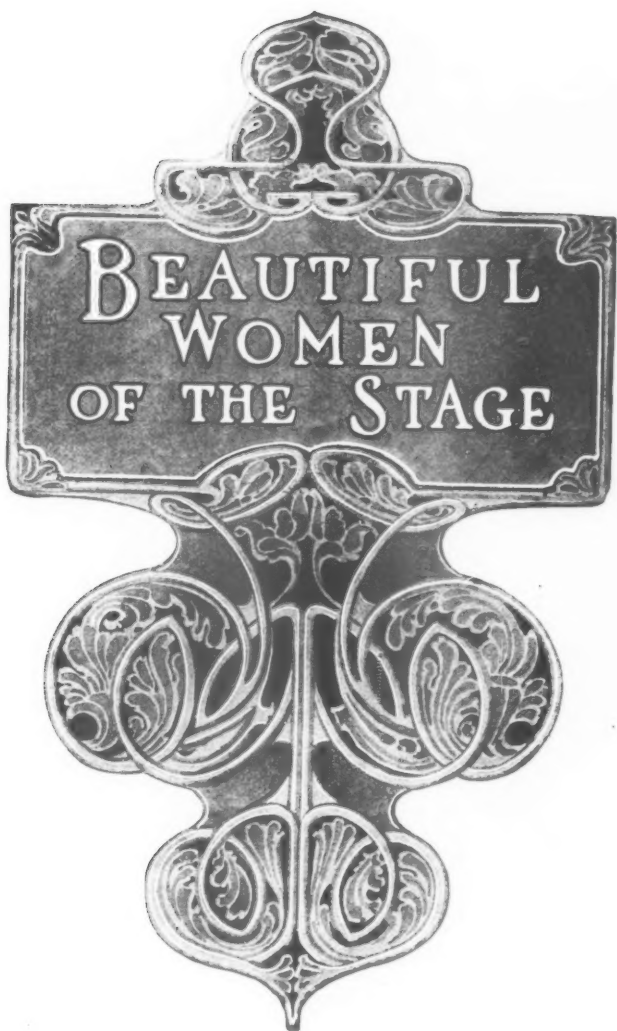
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September
1916

THE
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MAGAZINE

Vol. XXVII
No. 5

RAY LONG, Editor

THE Red Book Magazine's new serial: a novel by the author whom we consider the most accomplished of all the women writing to-day.

The Heart of a Man

By Hallie Erminie Rives

Author of "Satan Sanderson," "Hearts Courageous," etc.

CHAPTER I

THE COUNSEL FOR THE DEFENSE

THE dark was falling over the courtroom. A lurid ray of the setting sun gleamed redly on dust-streaked window-panes and struggled disconsolately with the melancholy gleam of the oil lamps that an awkward attendant with creaking footsteps had laboriously lighted in their wall-brackets. Their pale radiance gleamed on the painted faces of dead jurists looking down from fly-specked canvases on the walls, and was reflected from the mass of moving, living faces that filled the room—faces whose eyes gazed alternately at the judge's vacant seat, and at the empty railed space that had penned in the restless jury now considering the verdict in an upper room—to return again and again to the spot where sat the man over whose sordid case a medley of voices had declaimed and wrangled throughout that spring day.



ILLUSTRATED BY
RICHARD CULTER

He sat slouched in his chair, his narrow, faded-blue eyes strained and frightened, fixed on the empty jury-box, his uncertain hand lifting from time to time to give a swift, furtive touch to his collar or a thrust to his wiry, sand-colored hair. In the pallid lamplight the hard sneer that had curved his lips during the dragging trial had faded, and his face seemed all at once piteous and younger.

To a stranger there would have seemed little in the circumstances to in-

spire the popular interest that full room betokened. The accused was a rough sawyer, known to his fellows of the logging camp as "Paddy the Brick," with a history of sluggishness and inebriety behind him. The crime of which he stood charged was the theft of a comrade's earnings, the story merely one of those sordid dramas of menial life which were so familiar. The evidence, though purely circumstantial, was to a casual eye sufficiently conclusive.

Yet in the minds of most of those who had filled the dingy courtroom during

THIS is the novel a hundred thousand book-lovers have been waiting for: a characteristic story by the author of the famous "Satan Sanderson" and "Hearts Courageous." From the dramatic courtroom scene described on this page to the very end of the book, it is vivid, surprising, wholly engrossing.

the two days just passed, there had been until the last hour a general expectation that the man would be cleared. This had been based upon nothing save the common knowledge that his counsel was Harry Sevier.



The latter had never failed to justify the expectations that had habitually heralded his doings. Young, likable, perfectly equipped and knowing his Southern world, he had returned, after a half-dozen years of foreign schooling, to step into a social niche readily accorded him by those who had seen little of him since boyhood. His gray eyes and crisp, dark beard had been distinguishing marks of forbears whose lives had been lived in that neighborhood and who had left their vivid impress upon the institutions of their time: statesmen, diplomats and soldiers had been of that line, and he himself, with his characteristic mannerisms, his unimpeachable grooming, his nice observance of the social code, had come to be regarded as the perfect pattern of his type.

Left an orphan at an early age, Henry Sevier had inherited a comfortable property and the income of a city block, and he spent his money judiciously, if lavishly. His Panhard was the swiftest car in town, as his offices were the most sumptuous, though ostentatiously simple in appointment. He had a Japanese valet, and the "at homes" which he occasionally gave in his bachelor apartment, though they might be denominated "pink teas" by the envious unbidden, were affairs to which an *entrée* was a social hallmark. He maintained also a shooting-box on an upper slope of the Blue Ridge,—a comfortable bungalow set in a hundred acres of wilderness,—whither of autumns he and a dozen other choice spirits were wont to fare for a fortnight's tramping and fishing, eating homely food cooked by the negro caretaker, and sleeping on pungent hem-

lock boughs. He had a gift for private theatricals—he was in constant demand by the Amateur Dramatic Club—and had a nice appreciation of music and art.

Moreover, Henry Sevier had injected into the somewhat cut-and-dried legal life of the old Southern capital an unusual and winning element of personality, and a method at variance with established usage. His very eccentricities had set him apart from the mass, and the apparent contempt for material reward with which he defended poor and unknown clients as readily as rich and influential ones had its appeal to a class which possessed imagination and ideals. There had seldom been a case in which he had not successfully employed a curious subterranean logic—an apparently willful insistence upon what seemed at first glance the unvital and immaterial—as a preliminary to a swift *volte-face* by which he turned the evidence at a new and unexpected angle of inference, and drove home the doubt with a brilliant display of oratory which captivated and—for the moment—convinced. In the four years in which he had stamped his individuality upon the town, he not only had never lost a criminal case, but had created a certain conviction that a trial in which he figured would offer unmistakable elements of surprise and entertainment. So the Criminal Court had come, in a way, to be the fashion; and the dingy chambers of justice saw many an assemblage that would have graced another sort of gathering.

Seldom, however, on this day had Harry's glance through his gold-rimmed eyeglasses wandered to the benches. With many there he had danced and golfed and bridged a hundred times. That, however, had been play; this, which had come to furnish another and quite as fascinating a sort of entertainment for them, was what he had chosen to make the more serious business—in so

YOU have never met a more interesting trio of characters than Echo Allen, Harry Sevier and Cameron Craig, about whom this story is woven. They are so intensely human that from the start you feel as if they were real people who had entered your acquaintance.  

far as anything had been serious to him—of his life. So his apparent disregard of this tribute to his personality, set over against the palpable frivolity of purpose that actuated the majority of his audience, was, after all, only another indication to them of that fine sense of the fitting for which his world admired him.

THROUGH the long morning the evidence had accumulated. One by one the merciless rivets had been driven home by the prosecuting attorney. The chain of evidence seemed flawless. And Harry Sevier's cross-examination had seemed scarcely more than perfunctory—had appeared somehow to miss that subtle and pregnant suggestion, that longer reach that heretofore had uncovered a hitherto unnoted but baffling doubt. Yet to those who knew him this but pointed to a more effective climax, a more engrossing sensation when the psychological moment should arrive and that appealing figure arise to insert the nicely calculated spoke in the wheel that, under the manipulation of the State's attorney, was rolling so swiftly on its ominous course; and on the back benches, where sat a group of members of the Country Club, a whispered bet that the accused this time would not get off, found as usual a ready taker.

Evidence finished, the Court rose for a recess, and Harry vanished through a side-door. Ten minutes later he was in his office. He vouchsafed no word to the clerk who sat in the outer room, but passed quickly through to the inner sanctum and closed and locked the door. The self-control bred of the strenuous occupation of the courtroom had slipped now from his face, leaving it suddenly strained. There were moist drops upon his forehead, but his hands were dry. He drew the blind to shut out the dull gray winter light and switched on the electric desk-lamp; and as he did so, his eyes

turned stealthily to the wall—to a locked cabinet the key of which was in his pocket.

They turned away again almost immediately to the baize-covered desk, where stood a plain, flat silver frame. It held a photograph, untinted, of a portrait painted by Sargent which had been a *salon* favorite of a few years before. It was that of a young girl, seated and leaning intently forward from an armchair. One hand was at her throat; the other dropped against the dusky shoulder of a dog stretched at her feet; and in her dark eyes was the eternal question which maidenhood asks of life. The lines of the face were cameolike, and its Southern beauty held that peculiar blend of ingenuousness and hauteur that is the result of the selection and inbreeding of generations. He stood still a moment, looking fixedly at it, his tongue touching his lips, before he crossed the room and turned the picture face-down upon the desk. He almost ran to the cabinet, unlocked its mirrored door and took from it a bottle and a glass. He poured out a full goblet of the gurgling liquid and drank it off. Then he drew a long breath.

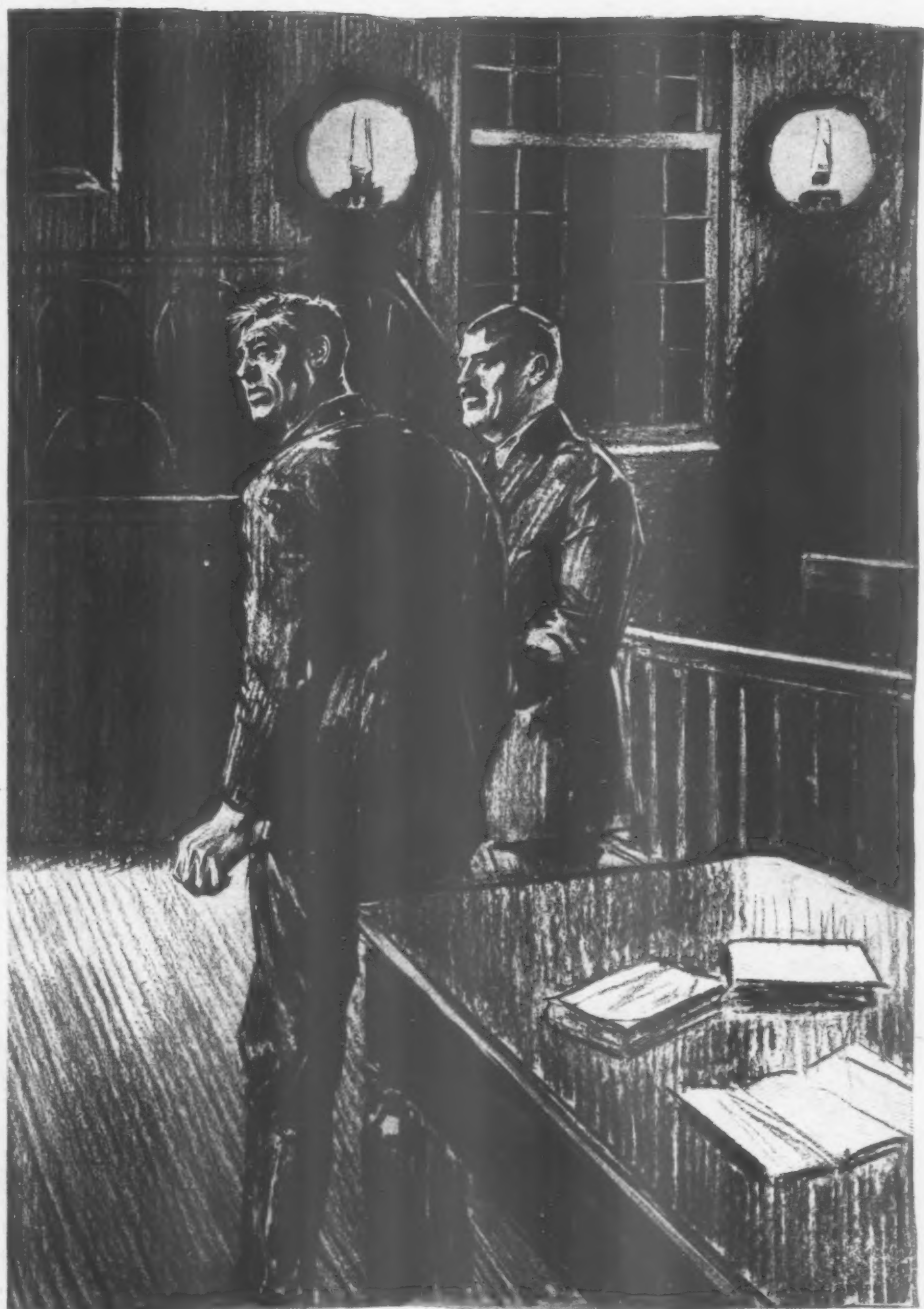
"Yes," he said half aloud. "I'll lie to myself no more! I've got to have it or throw up the sponge. It was my own once, that wonderful gift—whatever it is. Once it was my own brain, unhelped, that sent the glow to my heart and the fire to my tongue—till words had glorious colors and pictures painted themselves out of nothing. Once it was my own mind that saw a problem as clear as crystal. But I wasn't content. I wanted the short-cut, and this showed me the way. And now—now—I've dropped the reins. It's not Harry Sevier that wins cases—it's the bottle!"

He began to stride up and down the narrow room; deep lines had etched themselves in the mobile face. "There was the Davenport Case," he said to





Sevier came to his feet with a start, suddenly aware that the slouching figure beside him had arisen at the heavy touch of the ventional expression of professional regret. But he did not speak. Instead, as the narrow, red-rimmed his vision. His unsomber, kaleidoscopic mind had opened to something that lay naked and scowl and sneering bravado—a concrete fact, perturbing and vaguely

sheriff
eyes st
anguish
horri



sheriff's hand. He took a step forward, the lawyer for a moment again uppermost, the perplexed mind groping for the con- eyes stared for a breath into his, Harry's outstretched hand fell at his side and a painful blur swept across anguished beneath the haggard face of the prisoner, something no longer glossed by sullen horrifying, which would not express itself in mental symbols.

ARE you the sort of man who says, "Oh yes, I take my drink, but I don't *have* to have it. I can let the stuff alone any time I want to. But I do like the 'kick' in a glass of good liquor; it puts new life in me—"? If you are, you'll meet in this story a man who talked to himself the same way—and you'll see into what sort of situation it led him.  

himself, "Not a shred of decent evidence to go on, and the whole court packed with prejudice, and he was as guilty as the devil. Yet I won! That was only a year ago, but I couldn't do it now—without what is in that decanter! All day yesterday I was heavy; my mind was as blank as a glacier. In the cross-examination I couldn't see a foot before me. But for this half-hour it would go hard with my client at the finish."




"As it is, I wouldn't want a better foil than old Mansfield for the prosecution. How he has slaved over his witnesses! I might have made some of that testimony that sounded so damning look like a cocked hat if I had gone about it in his laborious way. For this Paddy the Brick has plenty of friends, for all his crookedness. Half the logging-camp, apparently, chipped in to make up my retaining-fee. But pshaw! What's the use? I can get him off without it. Mansfield is one of those human steel-traps that you can make the dull yokels in the jury-box positively hate merely by thrumming the right chord—the note that sets sympathy vibrating for a fellow-being struggling in the toils. In the last analysis, it's feeling, not facts, that will sway them—feeling first, and then conscience. Every man of them must see *himself*, first shivering in the shoes of my thief, and then wearing the Judge's gown. When the psychological moment comes, there is only to drive home the fallibility of circumstantial evidence and sear those twelve slow-going, matter-of-fact brains with a sense of the inherent perversity of appearances!" He smiled bitterly. "Especially," he added, "when there's whisky in the story. My client was drunk as a boiled owl when he was arrested; the stolen plunder might easily have been put on him, as he claims it was. The jury will understand that.

There's probably not a man on it who doesn't get squiffy now and then."

He stopped in his walk and held up a hand against the light; it wavered ever so little. The draught had not yet brought its accustomed poise of nerve, its tense certitude, its mental glow and confidence. With an impatient gesture he turned again to the cabinet. "One used to do it," he said; "it will evidently take more to-day to restore our bold Turpin to his career on the highway!" He set the empty glass in its place with a short laugh.

"Curious," he said. "If he *were* innocent, and drink *had* gotten him into this scrape, there would be a poetic justice in drink's getting him out!"

As he turned to lock the cabinet, the bell of his desk-telephone rang—three short, sharp rings. It was the clerk's warning that the court was about to re-assemble. He drew a deep breath and cast a quick glance at the little mirrored door. No tinge was rising in his colorless face, no warming tingle in his vein. His hands were uncertain, and his fingers had an odd numbness. A keen, cold edge of anxiety touched him. Always, heretofore, when he had sat with the black decanter, he had felt the wonderful, slow change—the gradual glow creeping through every nerve, the tightening of muscle and sinew as for a race, the thrilling, glad sense of renewed power and unleashed ability, and the inevitable quivering rush of lambent images in his brain. The signal was too long in coming to-day—and he could not wait! His hand shook as it reached again to the little shelf. An instant he hesitated; for a breath, while the light twinkled from the deep-cut facets, he strove to remember whether he had drunk one glass or two. Then with a frown he poured the draught, and drinking it off, locked the cabinet, and went hurriedly out.

ARE you the sort of woman who says, "Well, I don't want a man to be a mollicoddle. As long as he conducts himself like a gentleman, I don't see any harm in his taking a few drinks now and then—"? If you are, you'll understand just what Nancy Langham felt when she was asked to influence the man she loved, against drinking.   

WHEN he entered the courtroom, the wide space had filled again and the State's attorney had opened his address—a brief one, icily emotionless and rigidly exact—the very background upon which so often Harry Sevier's winged words had spelled victory for a cause prejudged as lost. And he was to reply—with the final speech for whose inspiration he had fled to that locked cabinet in the darkened inner office. Paddy the Brick listened with the look of some trapped thing gazing at its captor, sometimes turning toward his counsel a furtive, wavering glance that was blent equally of dread and doglike appeal. These glances were unreturned. Harry Sevier sat motionless, his eyes straight before him.

But behind that mask Harry's thought was turning and turning upon itself. The sudden sharp edge of anxiety that had caught him in his office had grown to a thriving fear. His ally was failing him. The master, whose upper hand he had just acknowledged—whose aid had been so freely given him in really vital moments—was forsaking him at the turn of a wretched, second-rate case of common thievery! He realized it with a sickening sense of wonder that mingled with a dull anger at the littleness of the issue, and through the confused mist of his mind his inner ear seemed to hear a far-distant sardonic laughter—as though the djinn of the bottle laughed in the locked wall-cabinet at his dismay.

He rose to speak for the defense, with an icy clog upon his faculties, while beneath that frozen surface the something that had been shackled reared and struggled vainly. Vocabulary, a certain cunning of phrase and logical sequence of argument had not deserted him; he realized this with a blind rage that seemed with a singular separateness to lie outside of himself—to associate itself strangely with the prisoner. But the per-

suation that had so often checkmated justice, the calculated force, the insinuating tactfulness, the living, warm appeal that had had their way in the past—these were absent. He had a curious feeling of duality, as though two Harry Seviens had suddenly and painfully drawn apart—the one whose measured voice was speaking, and the other which clamored and appealed, conscious only of its own deadly smother and of the despairing face of the man with the wiry, sand-colored hair who sat slouched in his chair beside him.

The roomful seemed very still. The judge was looking at him fixedly, through bowed horn-rimmed glasses set far down on his nose. Harry was aware that in the countenance of the State's attorney puzzle and a stealthy relief struggled together. With desperate narrowness he watched the faces of the jury for a sign, a tentative withdrawal of stolidity that betokened a quickened and awakening interest. But they sat moveless and impassive. There was a last hideous pause, in which he thought the foreman suppressed an incipient yawn, when his own brain refused further struggle. He knew that he had been betrayed. The door of human sympathy would not open; he had lost the magic key.

The reply of the State's attorney was a mere *résumé* of the evidence. He had needed no more. The judge's charge was brief. Then had come the stir of moving bodies and the buzz of whispers—the shuffling of feet as the judge retired and the jurors filed out—and at length the painful hiatus with the red sunlight and the pallid lamps.

This was broken presently by three measured raps on the door of the jury-room, which, as the judge reentered, opened to admit the jurors. They were quickly polled and the verdict given—guilty. The sentence followed.

With the fateful words, Harry Sevier turned his eyes, almost as if suddenly awakening from sleep, upon the courtroom, and met across the moving benches a woman's concentrated and wondering look. She was Echo Allen, the original of the portrait whose photograph lay face-down upon his office desk. The neutral-tinted presentment, however, had been far from realizing the concrete flush of sensuous beauty of its living original, with her straight, lithe frame, her hair all a wash of warm russets and sunny golds, framing a face perfect in contour and with a complexion as soft as a moth's wing. And the beauty of this was now deepened, if possible, by the shadow upon it of puzzled pain and inquiry. An instant the gaze between them hung; then it broke as she turned away, gathering her white furs about her throat with a slow, hesitant gesture.

With the sudden stab of shame and humiliation that rushed through him,—for he had not seen her there before that moment,—something seemed to break, too, in Harry's brain; it was the rigid lock which had been somehow put upon his faculties. The emptying room felt all at once a furnace, and little jerking shocks, like tiny electric currents, were running over him, prickling to the tips of his fingers. Intoxication was upon him, sudden and overwhelming, but he did not recognize it. He had never been drunk, in the sense popularly understood. He had always regarded with wondering distaste the occasional abject surrender of mind and body to the effect of alcohol with which he was familiar in men of his class; and the vulgar spree filled him with disgust. His indulgences, deeper and more and more frequent as they had grown of late, had been hidden behind the shades of his inner office, and the liquor he had drunk there he had never carried in his legs. For him these cloistered hours had meant no harrowing aftermath of remorse, but only the strange mental exaltation that had borne him to success. He sat now outwardly calm and collected, but mentally in an odd confusion, grasping at strange, alert suggestions that were thronging about him in a lurid phantasmagoria.

He came to his feet with a start, suddenly aware that the slouching figure beside him had arisen at the heavy touch of the sheriff's hand. He took a step forward, the lawyer for a moment again uppermost, the perplexed mind groping for the conventional expression of professional regret. But he did not speak. Instead, as the narrow, red-rimmed eyes stared for a breath into his, Harry's outstretched hand fell at his side and a painful blur swept across his vision. His unsomber, kaleidoscopic mind had opened to something that lay naked and anguished beneath the haggard face of the prisoner, something no longer glossed by sullen scowl and sneering bravado—a concrete fact, perturbing and vaguely horrifying, which would not express itself in mental symbols.

With hands clenched and a face like a sleep-walker's, Harry crossed the emptying room to the side door, where his motor now waited.

"Anywhere, Bob," he said thickly, "but go like the devil till I tell you to stop, if it's a thousand miles!"

As the burnished mechanism shot into pace and the cool wind stung his face, the early arc-lights swelled to great pallid moons that hung high above the roadway, and in their yellow luster the thing he had seen in the prisoner's face suddenly shouted itself to his brain. He flung up an arm as though to ward a blow.

"He wasn't guilty!" he gasped. "He never did it, by God!"

CHAPTER II

A MAN AND A WOMAN

THE girl whose gaze had for that instant found Harry Sevier's across the crowded courtroom left the place with her mind in a strange conflict of feeling. She was nonplused and puzzled. She had entered for that last hour, sharing intuitively the general belief that the prisoner would be acquitted—a belief, founded like that of the rest, upon her knowledge of his counsel. She had seen no straining for the spectacular in what some had been wont to call "Harry Sevier's pyrotechnics," and on past occa-

Echo Allen, the heroine of this absorbing novel, and Harry Sevier . . .

"He had been to her a dominant personality. She had not lacked the masculine homage of a dozen others of their set, but Harry Sevier had always been the imminent figure in her thought, and it had needed no spoken word or promise between them to link her imagination wholly to a future in which he reigned supreme."



sions on which she had heard him address a jury she had fallen wholly under the spell of that peculiar magnetism that swayed all alike. Aside from his continuous success in a calling with which her whole life had been associated,—her father, Judge Beverly Allen, was Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and his father had been Chancellor before him,—aside from his brilliant way, his social standing, his undenied leadership among his fellows, he had been to her a dominant personality. She had not lacked the masculine homage of a dozen others of their set, but Harry Sevier had always been the imminent figure in her thought, and it had needed no spoken word or promise between them to link her imagination wholly to a future in which he reigned supreme. So his failure to-day had affected her strongly.

On the dusky courthouse steps she stopped to exchange greetings with a group who chatted there. They were full of the puzzle of Harry Sevier's failure or laughingly rueful at their own discomfiture, and she stopped but a moment before a negro driver tucked her into a carriage. As he climbed lumberingly to his seat and gathered up the reins, a heavy, assured figure approached the curb. Cameron Craig was big and broad, and in his young but rugged face lines of conflict had early etched themselves. It was a strong and arrogant face, keenly expressive of will and accomplishment. He shook hands with her with a smile.

"I didn't know you were in town," she said, with a trace of aloofness.

"I'm here for only a day or two," he answered. "I had to talk a little politics with my attorney, Mr. Treadwell. It's his busy day, it seems, and as the mountain couldn't come to Mohammed, Mohammed came to the mountain. So here I am at the halls of justice. It's been an entertaining afternoon,—the trial, I mean,—but upon my word, I thought at first I had got into a convention of the Daughters of the Confederacy."

She achieved a smile, but it came with difficulty. "Oh, court has become a social dissipation with us. It competes now with auction-bridge and the fox-trot."

"You tempt me to steal a purse or two," he said. "I love to hold the center of the stage. The only thing I've been charged with stealing so far is an election, but one never knows to what heights one may rise. If I pick your pocket, will you come to my trial?"

"If it were my pocket, I'd have to, wouldn't I?"

He bowed smilingly and turned away, as the coachman flicked the tossing manes with the tip of his whip. Looking over her shoulder, while the horses whirled her away, Echo saw his big frame swinging up the steps into the emptying building, every move expressive of virile strength and conscious power.

These were traits Cameron Craig had acquired through direct inheritance. His father had come, penniless, to a small town in the adjoining State, where with calm assurance and without unnecessary delay he had married the neighborhood's prettiest girl and preëmpted a worn-out iron deposit with a tumble-down furnace, relic of a series of disgusted British owners. With the same certainty of judgment he had uncovered the lost ore and developed the property till it paid a miraculous dividend; then he had died. He had been a man of one idea—the "Works"—and had known and cared for nothing else. The son, however, with his father's force and will, had inherited, with less praiseworthy traits, a further ambition. The young Cameron Craig's first free act after his schooling ended was to dispose of the iron plant and to throw his money and his brain together into a group which now stood back of the great Public Services Corporation that held in control the vested interests of two States, exclusive of the railroads. At thirty he was a personality that loomed large in organized politics, and might be depended on to loom steadily larger to the end of the chapter.

AS Craig entered the old building now, he was thinking of the face of the girl he had just left, with its brilliant beauty and flashing youth.

"Why not?" he said to himself. "She has birth and breeding, but I can match them with things the world counts as high. I've never failed yet to get what



This was "Midfields," the home of the Allens for four generations and of the Beverlys before them.

I wanted—if I wanted it enough!" His thought recurred to the trial and to Harry Sevier. "Curious that nobody seemed to guess what the matter was—no one but me. But I know what that look back of his eyes meant. The young fool! To have that gift—everything right in his hand—and then to throw it away. For that's what it will come to, sure as fate, in the end!"

A hand fell upon his shoulder. It was Lawrence Treadwell, the attorney, and Craig followed the latter into a private room and sat down. "Have you got the new committee-list?" he asked without preamble.

For answer the other took a closely written paper from his pocket and handed it over. "Senator Colby sent it down by his secretary this morning."

Craig drew his chair to the table and began to make penciled changes and corrections, his hand moving swiftly and unhesitatingly. "There," he said, returning it. "That will be better. Let the Senator have it back to-morrow." He sat a moment silent, his strong white fingers drumming on the table. "By the way," he said then, "is this young Sevier likely to take a hand in the next campaign?"

"I don't know," replied the other. "I've always expected him to burst into politics some day. He has a curious hold on people—a wonderful magnetism. To-day is the first jury-case I've ever known him to lose. He as well as let it go by default. How he came to handle it so beats me!"

Craig might have enlightened him, but he did not.

"I've concluded we don't want him," he said. "He's uneven: the trial to-day proved that. Besides, he's too high-chinned—we can't depend on his type to obey orders. We are coming to a big fight, and we want the decks clear. No overtures to him. We must cut out every man whose absolute footing we can't count on till the day of judgment."

The attorney lighted a cigar and regarded its blue haze thoughtfully before he answered. "All right," he agreed. "I should have picked him for good material. But you're the doctor."

MEANWHILE the carriage was whirling Echo Allen over the darkening asphalt. The tired day lay still, watching under dusky lids the moon, a great blown magnolia, floating in the limpid sky. As the horses pounded on, the driver's voice broke in upon her reverie:

"Reck'n Marse Harry done got dat man cl'ar, Miss Echo, lak he allus do?"

She drew her furs closer about her throat with a little gesture as though dismissing a baffling problem. "No, 'Lige—not this time."

"Sho now!" he exclaimed, looking back with his lips framed to a whistle. "Mus' of bin pow'ful guilty ef *he* couldn' git him off! Ah reckon dem yuthah lawyahs 'cluded dey wanten tek Marse Harry down—he done put it ovah *dem* so often—en dey jes' tek dat 'cused man, en fool eroun', en fool

eroun', tell dey done *prove* it on him!"

But 'Lige's sage reflection upon the situation brought now no smile to Echo Allen's face.

At length the horses came to a great double gate, lighted with heavy wrought-iron lamps, opening on a curving drive, into which they turned, to swing panting up to a wide-porched mansion set in a grove of oaks and acacias. This was "Midfields," the home of the Allens for four generations and of the Beverlys before them. Its wide wings and columned front spoke of old Colony days, as did its name of a time when rolling acres of tobacco instead of suburban streets surrounded it. Twilight was drifting thickly over it now, and the box-hedged garden, with its plenteous rose-shrubs and ivied sun-dial, was purpled with shadow.

Echo jumped down without assistance and ran into the hall, throwing off her hat and coat and pausing before a glass to pat into place the rebellious whorls of her gold-brown hair before she entered the dimly lighted library.

It was a wide, pleasant room, with tradition and gentle birth in every line of its furnishing. The table held an old china lamp of gilt and lapis-lazuli blue, and the simple colonial bookcases were of rich-veined mahogany which held the same shimmering, tawny lights as Echo's hair and had leaded-glass doors in key with the silver, glass-prismed candlesticks on the mantelpiece. A huge old English screen of painted leather stood at one side, and on the dull green walls were framed steel engravings of the ancestral home of the Allens in Dorsetshire and of that sturdy ancestor, in lace and peruke, whose rugged signature is on the Declaration. The place had but one modern touch—a splendid portrait of Echo herself that hung between two great windows—the canvas whose photograph at that moment lay face-down in Harry Sevier's inner office.

In the room sat her father, the Judge, reading a magazine. He was a pale, placid man, straight and gray as a silver birch, with ivory, distinguished features that suggested an old daguerreotype and seemed to call for a silk-velvet waistcoat and a stock. He tossed the magazine

aside as she came to him; stooping, in a swift, birdlike way, she dropped a kiss on the top of his billowy gray hair.

"There you are," she chided, "ruining your poor eyes in this wretched light!"

She turned the reading-lamp higher and drew the curtains. As she pulled the heavy folds together, they swept from its place a heavy brass bowl filled with Maréchal Niel roses, and it fell with a crash onto a frail Italian desk of dark rosewood which stood in a corner.

She sprang with a cry to catch it. "I'm as bad as Uncle Nelson!" she exclaimed. "How lucky it didn't spill!" She set the bowl back and passed a hand along the polished desk-top, frowning. "It has made a terrific dent in the poor old thing!" she said remorsefully. "It must have jarred it frightfully. I'm so sorry!" She looked at her father, who had half risen at her cry. "You were always fond of the little old desk, though you never used it. I used to love it when I was a child. It was so mysterious, with its tiny cubby-holes and carvings. Some one told me once that such foreign desks always had secret drawers, and I used to spend hours trying to find one. Where did it come from? Did it belong to Grandfather?"

"No," he answered, "it was willed to me many years ago by—a friend. It was when you were a baby."

"How curious," she said, "for a man to choose a piece of furniture like that! Why, it's as feminine as a toilet-table!" She came and perched one small toe on the fender, as he asked: "Where's Nancy?"

"I haven't seen her since luncheon. She was going to tea at Mrs. Spottiswode's."

"Her father has written me," said the Judge. "He says she must come home at the end of the week. He says if she doesn't, he'll start an action against somebody for kidnaping—says nobody can fix his coffee just right but her."

She smiled. The two families were lifelong friends, and since their board-school days she and Nancy Langham had exchanged annual visits. "I'll tell her," she said. "I wish she could stay

longer, though it's lonely for her father, no doubt. I love to have her here. She's—fond of Chilly, and I've been hoping it—might have an influence over him."

The Judge sighed. The name of Chisholm Allen, Echo's twin brother, was a synonym in the city for debonair devil-may-care. With the likableness that kept him popular even among those staid members of society who did not countenance his pecadillos, he combined a negligence and dissipation that from his boyhood had made him a thorn in the flesh to his father.

"Yes," he said, "she's fond of him. That's why I think she shouldn't stay too long."

There was silence for a moment. Then he said, in a lighter tone: "I wonder how Sevier's case came out. It was expected to finish to-day, wasn't it?"

"Oh," she answered, "he lost. The jury found against him. I was there for an hour, just at the end."

He made an exclamation of surprise, and stole a quick glance at her, but she had bent down to straighten a shoebuckle and he could not see her face. "Ah, well," he said, "it won't do him any harm to get a set-back now and then. Perhaps he needs it. Were there many there?"

"Half the world," she answered. "I saw Cameron Craig."

"So he is in town, eh? I must send a note to the hotel and ask him to luncheon to-morrow."

She was silent, and he said, quizzically: "Come; my dear, you mustn't be such a chin-tilted patrician. 'Other times, other manners.' Craig has his place, and it's not a low one, either."

She made a move of impatience. "He's a member of the best clubs in his own city, and all that, I know. He belongs there. But here it is different. We are not beholden to him. Why should we go out of our way to treat him like one of

us? He isn't, really. He may be a university man, and he may have traveled all over the world. Yes, and I'll admit he has manners—a manner, if you like—too. But there's something that keeps him an outsider just the same. Besides, people tell unpleasant tales about him."

Her father cleared his throat. Gossip had been prolific in tales of Craig as regards the fairer—and frailer—sex. He had heard the stories—unsavory ones, such as inevitably cling to men, whatever their business or social standing, who acquire the whispered reputation of the voluptuary. He had himself, however, a singular reserve of judgment, coupled with an impatient intolerance of scandal. Men to him were as he found them, till the event proved otherwise.

"I know what you mean," he said judiciously. "He hasn't our traditions and standards. That's true. He's not born to them. But this is an uncharitable world, my dear, and half the tattle one hears is apt to be sheer envy. He is a person of importance. He has a good deal of influence, as well as money, and is affiliated with men with whom a large part of my earlier life was associated."

She hardly heard his closing words: "Influence

and money!" she repeated, with a little shrug. "Why need we bother about them? The judiciary, thank heaven! has nothing to do with political influence, and as for money, I should hate to think that what we have came, like his, from the United Distilleries!"

"Echo!" The name fell sharply behind them.

BOTH turned—the Judge a little self-consciously—to where his wife stood in the doorway. She was already dressed for dinner, and her dark corsage set off her white neck and beautifully rounded shoulders—a cool, statuesque woman, of



The old man shook his head. "Marse Chilly done tellyfoam he won't be home fo' diinnah, suh."

unfailing poise and manner, with her gray hair perfectly disposed above a complexion whose tinting was the despair of many a younger matron. Instinctively the girl's hand had crept to the Judge's arm, and insensibly the two had drawn a shade nearer together.

Mrs. Allen stood looking at them a moment, faintly smiling, before she said deliberately: "This is a ridiculous way of talking. Please let me remind you that your father was the Trust's counsel for many years, and until he went on the Bench."

"Oh, I forgot—" Echo began, distressed. "I only meant—"

"There, there!" the Judge said, frowning. "People feel differently about those things. You have a perfect right to think in that way, if you choose."

"I couldn't think anything *you* did was wrong," she cried passionately. "And, anyway, giving a company legal advice is very far from being in its business. *Everyone* has to have lawyers, of course. They defend even criminals."

He smiled quizzically at her argument. "Well," he countered, "I'm respectable in my old age, at any rate." He had pressed a button as he spoke, and to the grizzled negro who now entered he said: "Nelson, has your Marse Chilly come in yet? If he has, I'd like to see him."

The old man shook his head. "Marse Chilly done tellyfoam he won' be home fo' dinnah, suh."

The Judge pulled his chin, palpably annoyed; but quick to his resentful mood, Echo laid her hand caressingly on his arm.

"Never mind, dear," she said coaxingly. "Don't fret about Chilly."

Mrs. Allen's voice interposed. "Chilly

sent *me* the message an hour ago," she said, with an accent that seemed finally to dismiss the topic. "I think you would better dress now, Echo. Nancy came in an hour ago, and dinner's at seven-thirty."

CHAPTER III

THE AWAKENING

AN automobile speeding through the starry dark! No hesitant progress through congested traffic, no frequent swerving for daylight wayfarers. The city was far behind now—only the clear,

well-nigh deserted road, winding like a tremulous magenta ribbon through the swooping gloom that seemed to shrink and cringe from the metal monster hurtling after its golden halo through the eddying dust.

A practiced hand was on the throttle, and the yellow-lined face bent over the wheel was shrewd and keen. There had been no supper for Bob that night, and no evening at Black Joe's billiard-parlor, but the chauffeur knew his master. "Go like the devil till I tell you to stop," the other had said, and without the word from the moveless figure on the rear seat he would obey till the engine stopped or his hand went

numb on the wheel. Hamlets flashed by—huddles of flaring street-lights—then shadow and blankness again. Now and then a hollow rumbling marked a bridge, or a jovial, beckoning doorway betokened a road-house. Ten, twenty, thirty miles; a turn of the wheel, and the car swept into a divergent highway. Another mile and again a turn—Bob was shuttling back and forth now, fearful of an impossible distance from home.

The man behind him sat as if graven in stone. At first, while his senses in-

That New Novel

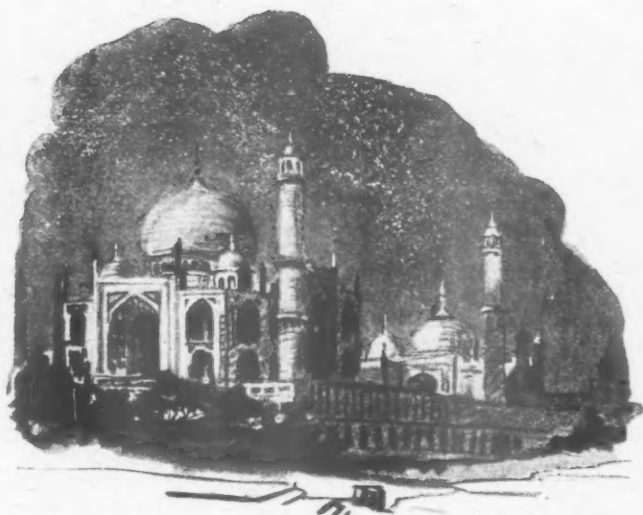
by

Rupert Hughes

will be begun as a serial just as soon as Captain Hughes' military duties permit him to finish it. As this is written, the story is progressing wonderfully, under the circumstances. It is the most absorbing Mr. Hughes has written. It is the story of *The Girl Who Had Never Had Anything and The Man Who Had Always Had Everything*; the title is

"We Can't Have Everything"

Continued on page 1014 of this issue.



The Man Who Saw Beyond

By Harold MacGrath

Author of "The Man on the Cox" etc

ILLUSTRATED BY WILLIAM OBERHARDT

WHAT is the most beautiful living picture given human eyes to gaze upon? In my opinion it is a young and lovely woman with her arms full of flowers. Second only to this is the Taj Mahal in the moonlight. Both have I seen, and both have stimulated in my heart poetry and reverence; and that is the official business of beauty.

The first I met one day last May in an English garden. The air was redolent with a thousand changing perfumes, the blue bowl of heaven skirted and frilled with spotless clouds; peace in sky and peace on land! And yonder, a day's journey to the east, nations were locked in grim death-grips. It seemed to me that I had just passed through a nightmare and was back among the familiar realities of life once more. I

drew in one deep breath after another, fearing I might miss some perfume.

She came through the opening in the box-hedge, and her arms were filled with lilacs. She was holding them close to her throat, and their nearness lent to her skin the tint of a wonderful pearl! I once saw in a shop in the Chandni Chowk in Delhi. I felt my years painfully. Grizzled old bachelor that I was, what had I done with my youth?

"Aren't they exquisite?" she said to my sister. She sat down by the tea-table.

I was introduced—rather carelessly, I thought.

"Lilacs—they remind me of home," I said, looking down into my cup for fear she might see the curiosity in my eyes and misinterpret it.

The children were playing tennis on the other side of the hedge, and we three

sat alone. I was feeling very old and very sad, for I had just landed in England. I had spent fourteen months in France, patching up the poor broken things that had once been men. I had stood on the reverse side of war's tapestry, as it were. Here and there across the world they know me as a capable surgeon, but I am a biologist by preference, and plagues are my hobby. After all I had passed through, this lovely young woman was to my senses like a tonic wine.

It was one of those perfect English faces, a type peculiar to England alone: delicate in feature, blue of eyes, proud yet gentle in expression. She was very pale, and this pallor was singularly enhanced by thick and heavy coils of hair. It was a peculiar red; it burned in sunlight and smoldered in shadow. I had never seen that identical tint in hair before. It recalled to my mind the sometimes unaccountable ash of chestnut.

"Home?" She smiled across the lilacs, then bent and breathed their fragrance. "That will be America, I'm sure."

I laughed. "It is impossible for us Americans to brazen it out under the plea of cosmopolitanism. For twenty years or more my gray hairs have been wandering up and down the world, and still I can't learn to broaden my *a*, and I am still hanging desperately to my *g*."

"How stupid of me!" she exclaimed. "I did not recognize the name. You are Kate's brother."

"I wanted you to make that discovery yourself," said Kate.

"And of course you are Glorianna Brooks. Glorianna! Do you know, I think that is a wonderful name? There's a lilt to it, like old Irish music." My sister stared at me, puzzled; and a glow came into Miss Brooks' cheeks. Kate had doubtless told her that I was "a lovable old stick," and I determined to shock both of them out of that idea. So I went on: "Kate, when she writes, which is about once a year, generally November,—no doubt a covert prod not to forget the kiddies on Christmas!—is always referring to Glorianna, but like a woman, always hazily. She goes here with Glorianna, and Glorianna goes

there with her. Not a bit of description, age or history—just Glorianna Brooks."

"Gordon, you are talking like a school-boy." Kate turned apologetically to Miss Brooks. "Still, he is a nice brother. But heavens! the way he wanders about, with his germ-bottles and his resounding names. Facts, and more facts! He doesn't believe in tea-grounds as a vehicle for future events, or in palmistry or dreams. Think of it, Glory; he never believed in Santa Claus or Hans Andersen! He went wrong from the start."

"All the more marvelous that I should suddenly turn about-face at my age and confess a readiness to believe in any kind of rigmarole."

"You've had an adventure!"

"Of a sort," I replied carelessly.

"Glory, he's always having adventures, and still he believes in nothing but facts. He knows all about the bubonic plague, but he has to go to another doctor whenever he has the slightest cold."

"You are just back from France?" asked Glorianna.

"Yes."

And the light went out of her face, out of my sister's, and the tonic went out of my wine.

"When will it end?"

"God knows! Never was there a war with so many brave, resolute, unflinching men."

"So many go and never come back," said Glorianna, putting the lilacs on the tea-table. "The best we have."

"The best all have," I said. "I went to France in passionate anger against the German; but I don't believe I shall ever be angry at anything again. I've seen too much suffering. Ha!" I exclaimed gratefully, "here's Jack. Hello, soldier!"

"Hello, sawbones!" was the hail of my sister's brother-in-law. His right arm was in a sling. A machine-gun at Loos had battered his shoulder so badly that I had had some doubt of his ever using the arm again. Anyhow, its full lifting power would never be the same. Otherwise he was in luck.

"How's the arm?"

"Hang the arm!" he grumbled. "It'll be a month before I shall be able to

swing it—two months before they'll let me go back."

I sighed. The maimed and battered all wanted to go back.

"Where's Henry?" I asked. Henry is my sister's husband.

"He'll be down on a later train. The munitions is keeping him infernally busy. Oh, we're getting the shells. Wait! A cup of raw tea, Kate."

He gulped the tea thirstily and smacked his lips. I smiled; I could not help it. War had changed this erstwhile fop, changed his manners, his bearing, his outlook. He no longer said "I fancy" or "Quite so" when he wasn't listening to a word you said. Now he talked straight at one, quickly and nervously. Only a year gone he would have been visibly shocked at a man's gulping his tea and smacking his lips over it. He sat down carefully.

"Any news?"

"None," I answered. "I took it into my head to come over for a day or so. A man kills himself in my work without realizing what he is doing. I sometimes feel as if I were dehumanized. Kate tells me Edwin Jameson is gone."

"Poor old Ned! There's the life. To fly at your enemy, five thousand feet in the air; to maul old man Death, wallop him, laugh at him, jeer at him; that's sport royal! Queer duffers, though, these air-men. Frightfully dull and stupid when off duty. Doped, as those Canadians say; mum as oysters, rarely smiling, and always looking at you sleepily—hang it!—just like vultures."

"High altitudes. They're supermen, anyhow, demigods. Once they have fought in the air, they cease to belong to the human family. They can't come back; they don't want to. It's like giving an ant wings; he'll never go back to the anthill. I've taken care of a lot of

them. I like to study them. They offer a new psychology. If they've got to die, they want to die up there; they don't want the field-hospital cot or the stretcher. Some odd phases. I have talked with several men who have fallen from dangerous heights. They tell me the moment they begin to fall, thought is suspended. They can't describe their sensations. Not insensible, mind you; simply they haven't the power to grasp their sensations mentally."

"To battle in the air!" said Glorianna dreamily.

"They're a reckless lot, though," commented the soldier. "It's hard work to match up pilots and observers. The pilots are on the par with grand-opera singers."

"I know of one case where they were evenly matched, an Englishman and a Belgian. I know the Englishman very well. I call him the man who cannot die. Each day he goes up searching out Death, and Death eludes him."

"Do you remember the hulloaloo they set up when Bleriot—wasn't it Bleriot?—

crossed the Channel?" asked Jack. "And now they fly from four to five hundred miles at a clip. We have practically conquered the sea and the air. What next, I wonder?"

"Strange thing," I mused, "that we conquer the elements only in the end to use them against human life."

"What about this aviator who cannot die? Does he want to die?" asked Glorianna.

"Yes. There's an odd tale there, an



Her arms were filled with lilacs.

old wives' tale, if you wish. It was this tale that led me to believe that I might possibly be wrong about Santa Claus. Do you believe in clairvoyance?"

"I don't know," she said.

"I do," said Jack soberly.

"You?"

"Yes. You scientific chaps may laugh as much as you please, but the thing exists."

"Until a little while ago I was one of those who laughed; but I do not laugh now. Is your case hearsay?"

"No. Years ago we had an old Scot in the gardens. He foretold death. My father, as you know, was a great mountain-climber. He generally spent the summers in Switzerland. Henry and I were boys then. One day in August old Roderick was varnishing my rod, when he suddenly assumed a listening attitude. Then he laid down the rod, stood up and uncovered reverently. 'What's the matter?' I asked. 'Son,' he said, his burr strangely absent, 'your father is dead.' That's all I could get out of him. And ten hours later we were notified by telegraph."

"I remember my father telling about that," said Glorianna. "And your friend has this terrible gift?"

"Yes. We have conquered the psychology of dreams in their relation to life—but second-sight! I confess that all my theories have experienced a rude jolt. I never believed in clairvoyance; I couldn't. All my life I have lived among facts, wonderful facts, startling facts, but none the less facts, tangible, explicable things. So I have come to the conclusion that in some human beings there is a little white corner in the soul."

"White corner?"

"Yes; all that is left of the celestial in the soul as it takes up its human abode. A masterless patch which may remain throughout life or become obliterated in childhood. Not a very scientific explanation, but it's all I have the ability to give. My researches have been purely medical; so in this instance I'm as much a layman as yourself. It is more or less a curse; no human possessing such a gift can possibly be happy or normal. Supposing I keep my tale until

dinner? It's rather long, for it begins in Agra fully three years ago. Any strangers coming?"

"Nobody but the Waynes and ourselves," said my sister; "and you know the Waynes."

"I'm glad of that. Somehow, I couldn't very well tell this tale before total strangers."

"It will be a good story, Glory," said Jack. "The old sawbones has been everywhere and seen everything."

"Old sawbones!" cried my sister, indignant. "He's only forty-four, and every gray hair in his dear old head is a life saved somewhere, a good deed done quietly."

"I believe," said Glorianna, holding out her hands to me, "that I'm going to like you far better than Jack. To save lives, instead of destroying them!"

"Oh, I say, Glory!" protested Jack.

"To give," she went on, "rather than to take. What is finer or nobler than that? I remember now. You're a Legion of Honor man."

"Oh, nobody pays any attention to medals any more. Still," I admitted, "it made me rather happy, because I wasn't thinking about it when it happened."

"The man with the white corner in his soul," she mused. "I am going to be very much interested in that tale. To foretell death. That is terrible. And because of this gift, he wants to die."

"I hope you don't misunderstand me," I said. "He wants to die, but on duty, in action, honorably and gloriously, as the fortunes of war. He's not the kind who would take any other way out. He really bears a charmed life. There's irony! He's in my hospital in Paris, smashed up. But that's part of the story."

The children's voices rose and fell. A tennis-ball came over the hedge, and I tossed it back. What would be their lot, these innocents?

Later, on the way down to dinner, I met Kate on the first landing. I threw an arm around her. I hadn't seen her in more than a year.

"Well, Kate, here we are, both of us, alive and kicking. You're forty and I'm forty-four. You're the lucky one. You've got a fine husband, a flock of fine chil-

dren and a host of friends. Sometimes I wish I had a home of my own. I'm a bit tired of wandering about footloose. When a chap's young, he doesn't mind. But I feel old to-night."

"Nonsense!" She kissed me.

"What a beautiful young woman your Glorianna is!"

"Isn't she?" Kate pushed me off at arms'-length and inspected me critically.

"No, Kate—not that. I shall never marry; but the sight of her has set me thinking that it would have been a good thing if I had. How is it I never saw her before?"

"She's been living on the Wales estate for three or four years."

Captain Wayne and I wore dinner coats. Henry wore the suit he had come down in; and Jack stuck to his khaki, because his shoulder made it difficult to get in and out of coats. But nothing could have impressed me more definitely as to the quality of England's seriousness and change of habits than this vision of a distinguished Englishman dining in an ordinary sack suit. He was returning to London that night.

There were no luxuries on the table, no wines, no hot-house fruits. I believe the box of *perfectos* I had given the butler to serve with coffee was an event. Tobacco! I have seen men dying with cigarettes between their lips; I have heard them call out for it before and after operations.

It was when the butler brought in the coffee that Glorianna leaned on her elbows and smiled at me across the table.

"Now," she said, "tell me about this man with the white corner in his soul, who foretells death, who wants to die and cannot."

"A yarn?" inquired Henry. "Good! I'm just in the mood for one. What sort?"

"An old wives' tale."

II

WHEN I tell a long story or deliver a lecture, I never look at my audience directly. When I am lecturing, I prefer to gaze over their heads, at the walls behind. When I am telling a story,

such as I told that night, I want something in my hand to twirl and twist, to draw patterns with, to balance on my palm—something, in fact, to keep my eye from roving. This makes for concentration with me and generally prevents interruptions; and to-night I didn't want to be interrupted. I selected a coffee-spoon; and no doubt I left the Taj Mahal and the various battle-fronts on my sister's fine damask tablecloth.

So I began:

I AM essentially a man of facts, incontestible facts. From everything that is not reducible to fact I turn aside. Well, the incomprehensible has happened to me. I have, in a sense, found the square peg that fits the round hole. I have made friends with a man who possesses the gift of second-sight. Let me be honest. If any of you had told me this tale, I should have listened respectfully and gone away smiling in my sleeve. I should have called it an old wives' tale, and forgotten it. My eyes have been convinced even while my brain rebels. I feel as though I had entered a blind alley and the way out had been sealed up. There exists, then, to my actual knowledge, a man who can foretell death in a curious way; or rather, let me put it this way: it is weirdly foretold to him. He cannot explain it, nor can I, any more than I can explain God.

I went to China in 1912. While in Shanghai—where I had had some interesting experience with typhus—I received report that the bubonic had broken out rather seriously near Udai-pur; and as I had some cultures I wished to experiment with, I sailed for India at once. After three weeks of ceaseless activity we succeeded in getting the upper hand. I then went up to Agra to rest. I wanted to see the Taj Mahal before I returned to Europe. Well, I saw it at sunrise, at blazing noon, at sunset, and in the exquisite moonlight. The sight of its celestial beauty always soothes me.

On my second night I went out about nine. The moon was glorious. I wandered about the silent gardens; I peered into the ponds where the tomb was beau-

tifully reflected, and at length mounted the marble terrace upon which the tomb itself stands. I went around to the Jumna side, for the moon was riding that way. Far off in the blue mists I could see the outline of the grim old fortress. Below me the river flowed smoothly, broken here and there by patches of sand upon which in the daytime those unspeakable vultures await the occasional religious suicide. Beauty and horror in the superlative; that's India. There was not the slightest ripple to disturb or deflect the perfect image of the moon.

I turned and leaned against the parapet, my elbows propping me, and gazed at the incomparable beauty of those "bubbles of marble" spangled with the iridescent sparkle of dew. I was happy and contented, for apparently I was all alone. At any rate, there were no bustling tourists about with their infernal "Grand!" or "Wonderful!" If there was any other visitor, he was doing what I was, giving his soul a drink.

There is a bit of magic in marbles at night. Have you ever noticed it? You cannot see where the marble ends and the sky begins; all outlines are nebulous. Human beings, so long as they remain motionless, are difficult to see—at least in the vicinity of the Taj Mahal at the season I speak of, when everyone wears white or military khaki. Imagine my surprise when, scarcely three feet from where I stood, came a pleasant English voice. I stared, and out of the mist gradually appeared the form of an English officer, his pith helmet under his arm.

"Lovely beyond words, isn't it?"

"It is."

"I wonder, has it ever occurred to you that it would be a fine thing to die close to something as beautiful as this tomb is?"

I moved toward him curiously. "That's rather an odd remark," I said bluntly. "Beauty makes for living, not for dying."

"Oh, it was merely a bit of poetry in me, trying to express itself. But the idea always gets hold of me when I stand here. India writes her poetry in marble."

"And I rather prefer it to the Anglo-Saxon brand," I returned.

He laughed and put on his helmet.

I have in all spent about six years in the Orient. Yet this was the first instance of the kind: an English officer had spoken to me without advances on my part.

"Is this your first view of it?" he asked presently.

"Indeed, no. I have stood here an even hundred times. It is a compelling magic."

We fell to discussing Shah Jahan, his prison-room in the fortress, his melancholy death, the favorite wife for whom this splendid sepulcher was built. His voice was young, but his face remained in obscurity. Feeling that conversation was about to die permanently, I gave him my name.

"Dr. Gordon Craig?"

"Yes."

"Where are you putting up?"

"At the Cecil."

"Ah! That accounts for my missing you. You are just up from Udaipur, where they've had a bit of the plague; and you have in your pocket a letter of introduction to me from Dr. O'Hara. And you haven't presented it! I like that. I like men who don't care a hang for strangers, who walk alone, who never stand in crowds but elbow through them."

"My apologies," I said; "but the truth is, I didn't want to be put up at the club—I didn't want to meet anyone. Outside my work, I'm rather an irresponsible duffer. I like to feel that I can pul. up stakes at two in the morning, if I want to, without inconveniencing anyone."

"I rather believe we shall hit it off, I'm like that. They tell me you did ripping fine work down there."

I shall not deny that I felt flattered. Science has never been able to crush completely that human attribute called vanity.

"How long will you be making your stop?"

"Three days longer, perhaps."

"That falls in nicely. We sha'n't be making friends of each other in that short time."

I thought this observation a match for his previous one regarding death and beauty.

"You don't believe in friendship?"

"I believe in it," he answered soberly, "but I no longer find it advisable to practice it. But enough of that. Suppose we start for the club? We can have our pegs in quiet. They are all at the Residency to-night."

I agreed readily. I wanted to see more of this chap who thought it ideal to die near something beautiful and who no longer made friends of men. He uttered these peculiar sentiments neither lightly nor dolefully, but in a matter-of-fact tone that carried conviction.

The night before I left Agra one of his brother officers talked him over. I gathered that the Lieutenant was "queerish," lonely and aloof by preference, had plenty of money, and was a thorough soldier though a reckless one in action. He hunted his tigers afoot, and that in India is the final word in the matter of physical courage.

"Queer! He was all right a few years ago, worked and played like the rest of us. But when he returned from England in 1910, he kept by himself. His mother died while he was home. But those things wear off, you know. We've all tried to get back on the old footing, but he won't let us. The only intimate he has is old O'Hara, and O'Hara is about on a par with him. I believe he got a bit of sun somewhere. You know how that acts. He spent two weeks at Aden before coming up; and we think he got it there without realizing it. Ever noticed his eyes? When he looks at you, he fairly digs through you. But he's clean as a whistle, and there's no family history, though we all take to the idea that there's a woman somewhere. Rummy!"

"I've noticed his eyes," I commented—as indeed I had. They were gray, deep-set and melancholy.

"He's a bit uncanny these days, too," went on my informant. "He and Lieutenant Bradford—an old chum—went up to Nepal to do some tiger-shooting. As they were about to start out one early morning, he suddenly declined to go. He wouldn't give his reasons, and he asked Bradford to put away his guns.

Bradford stormed about, and when he threatened to go alone,—the natives had beaten up a ripping old man-eater,—there was nothing to do but accompany him. Both crack shots, they missed the brute, who charged them. Bradford stumbled, and the tiger mauled him so badly that he died that night. There was a lot of whispering in the bazaars after he brought back Bradford's body—native talk. It got about that he knew Bradford was going to die. All bally rot, you know. You can't tell what's on the card for to-morrow. It isn't humanly possible. You're a doctor; you know all about those things. Have you ever come across a case where a chap could really take a peek into to-morrow?"

"I never have; and I honestly don't believe anyone ever has."

"Rummy!"

The subject of this trifling illumination came over to the station to see me off.

"We may meet again some day," he said as we shook hands. "I shouldn't mind that. I suppose I'm drawn toward you because you seem lonely. Is it by preference?"

"I've never given it thought," I answered honestly.

In truth, he had quietly driven home the fact that I was a homeless wanderer. On the other hand, I hadn't had the time to be lonely.

As I have said, I was his companion, off and on, for three days. There were fits of brooding, a strange, rapt brooding which had in it resignation rather than melancholy; and yet at a word from me he would become a cheerful companion. He never spoke of England, of home, of kith or kin.

When next I saw him, he was standing at the edge of a Zeppelin bomb-pit in the center of a street in Paris.

III

HE was staring moodily down into the rubble and twisted gas-pipes. Children—how quickly and happily they forget!—were running up and down the sides of the crater, and the eternal moving-picture man was, as usual, on the spot with his clicking camera.

In looks my man was about the same, a little leaner, a little harder, perhaps, but nothing observable beyond that. I noticed that he wore oil-stained puttees and that his uniform was generally marked with splotches of oil and grease. His face was unshaven. I naturally put him down for the motorcycle corps, a hard-working lot.

Well, I ran around the pit and clapped him on the shoulder. He stiffened repellently. He did not recognize me. Four days' growth blackened my cheeks and chin, and that would be a tolerable disguise if you happened to know me indifferently well. I remembered a little too late that he was one of those men who do not like to be touched familiarly.

"You don't remember me," I said, rather abashed. "My name is Gordon Craig."

"Dr. Craig? Why, yes—stupid of me. We met in Agra." His face brightened. "I have often thought of you."

He smiled at the bit of red in my buttonhole, and I smiled back at the silken bars on his coat—the highest military honors England and France and Belgium had to give. Evidently he had been in the thick of it. And I voiced this opinion.

"Rather! And what about you?"

"Oh, I've been in the thick of it too. Just got back from Bordeaux on a three-days' hunt for missing hospital stores, and I came in on a freight train. Don't I look it? Yes, I've been in the thick of it—and if you want the truth, a harder job than yours. No lust of battle where I hang out—only aftermaths, blood and bones and splinters of steel. I'm fagged. Was just on my way to my hotel when I saw you. Bath, shave and clean togs. I ought to drop in at the hospital, but I can't in this condition."

His gray eyes bored into mine. He nodded, either in approval of my condition or in acknowledgment of some



action he had that moment decided upon. "A bit different from peaceful old Agra and the Taj Mahal. What? I wonder, is that war?" He gestured toward the pit. "I can't dovetail this with the monumental bravery of their infantrymen. . . . And so I find you here in Paris?"

"And you?"

"Loos. I'm in on a twenty-four-hour leave. They've been rather easy with me since that Zeebrugge raid. I had a particularly strenuous day of it yesterday. We had a ripping fight with two of those new fast Fokkers. We disabled one. . . . What a glorious day it was up there! There wasn't a rag of fog or mist anywhere."

"Good Lord!" I exclaimed.

"What?"

"Why, it's *you*! You're the Captain Arthur Carmichael, and I never put the two names together."

"Oh, I went in for aviation in the fall of 1913. When the war broke out, I was transferred to the Royal Flying; and I've been on the British-Belgian front ever since we dug in. Come along to my apartments; they're not far—that is, if you have nothing else to do."

"I'd rather clean up first. My hotel is just around the corner. At least it was, three days ago. I'll tell you what: give me your address; I'll clean up and drop in on you about five."

"I don't want to lose you, Doctor. I'll go to your hotel and wait until

you've tubbed and shaved; then we'll go to my quarters. While I'm getting out of these, you can very well snooze on the lounge."

"Done!" For I did not want to lose him, either. Captain Arthur Carmichael, V. C.!

"I'll never get used to the smell of petrol. Two or three times I've had to come down on account of sea-sickness."

"No worse than iodoform."

"Can you dine with me?"

"Glad to."

So, arm in arm we marched off, a highly disreputable-looking pair of tramps—that is, if you take your military models from the illustrated magazines. The brassard on my arm was barely hanging together; my clothes were soiled with mud and grease and coal-dust; my boots were down at the heels, and the strings of my canvas leggings were knotted in at least ten places. Shoe-strings! Is anything harder for a man to buy? Gasoline and iodoform—we left a fine bouquet in our wake, I'll warrant.

HE had the furnished entresol over a shop in the Rue de Clichy. I had not been in Carmichael's quarters more than five minutes when I found myself wondering what it was the rooms lacked. For the life of me I couldn't touch the oddity I sensed. Finally I gave up, stretched out on the lounge and slept soundly until five, when he roused me for tea.

"Compliments of the concierge," he announced. "I never keep edibles here. We'll leave about quarter after six. There's a little restaurant not far from where the old Moulin Rouge used to be. We air-chaps generally congregate there when we are on leave. But we're rather a dull lot. We eat, smoke, talk a little and then go home, if we happen to have one. Oh, you'll hear laughter of a sort, but it's the kind you hear from men who have signed their death-warrants. Have you ever flown?"

"No; nor do I desire to."

"You miss a lot. There's a freedom up there. Men who walk will never know what it is."

"By the way, how do you come in?"

"By motor, if there's no attack going

on. I generally pick a lull. The roads are comparatively free then. But let the Germans start up a racket, and Paris is well-nigh impossible."

"You don't go to England, then, on any of your leaves?"

"I haven't crossed the Channel in more than five years."

WE started off a little after six. There was no conversation; a word here and there sufficed. My thoughts kept returning to his room, figuratively searching for the oddity.

"I know what it is!" I cried aloud, as we turned into the Boulevard.

"I beg pardon!"

"Fact is," I explained, "your rooms puzzled me a bit. Something lacking, and I couldn't tell what. It just struck me. Not a photograph anywhere in sight."

"You noticed that, then? You've keen eyes. You're the first man who ever noticed that lack. I have a horror of photographs."

Silence again. I was more puzzled by his attitude than by the fact. No photographs! Why, I had never yet run across a soldier, no matter in what army he served, who was without his photograph. Indeed, I've found many an officer's dugout a mere photo-gallery. I began to feel depressed. Evidently the poor devil had no loved ones. There were no wonderful heart-lifting letters from home. He had not been in England in nearly six years. False sweetheart and false friend—so I wrote it down in my book of observations.

The restaurant was modest and clean and cheap for the times. In the rear was a long, bare table. Here benches served instead of chairs. No doubt the place had been patronized by artists whose ateliers were in Montmarre, for the walls were well decorated with light-hearted sketches. How many of these hands are now cold and still? Some wag had recently drawn in charcoal a study of an Eskimo and labeled it—"The Only Neutral!"

There were about nine of us around the board. I heard some famous names. My companion was the only Englishman present. He spoke French quite as well

as he spoke English. As you know, the English and the French admire each other, but they do not fraternize companionably. The English are notorious for their indifference to the Continental tongues.

There was a thick but excellent cabbage soup, mullet, chicken, spinach and cheese. The proprietor himself served us; and he was old, bent and taciturn. I was told that he had lost his two sons in the great Champagne drive.

I was in the act of spreading cheese on my biscuit when I chanced to look at Carmichael. He sat rigidly erect, his mouth open slightly, his cigarette poised in midair. I seemed to be the only one who noticed the singularity of his expression. All at once his body relaxed. He dropped the cigarette and spoke to the Frenchman opposite, a young fellow not more than twenty-two, with eyes and nose hawk-like, and a mouth like a pretty woman's.

He came around the table curiously. My companion rose and conducted him a few feet away. There followed a low, earnest conversation. Carmichael seemed to be begging something.

"La, la!" cried the Frenchman, laughing as he drew back. He blew a kiss into my Englishman's face, drolly not impudently, and returned to his bench. His comrades quizzed him; but, still laughing, he shook his head and reached for the coffeepot.

"Come, let us be off," said Carmichael, his face leaden and his deep-set eyes filled with a species of chatoyancy like that which I have often noted in the eyes of drug-eaters.

I followed him into the street. The night air had grown suddenly keen. There was a northeast wind blowing. I fancied I could hear the faint rumble of the guns at Verdun. You know how your ears will trick you at night.

Carmichael sniffed the air. "Poisonous gas to-morrow, and bad holes up there."

"What was the row?" I asked; for I was certain that something unusual had happened to cut short our evening.

"I am accursed!" he said. "I warned him not to fly to-morrow. But he will, and he'll die. I saw the veil on his face,

Doctor. But they always laugh, and they always die. Yes, I am certainly damned!"

"Look here, young man, what the devil are you talking about?" I demanded, a queer thrill at the base of my neck.

"Death, my friend—Death, whom I seek each day and who refuses my hand. O'Hara knew, believed and understood. But he is dead. Will you believe and understand, or will you laugh? I had a purpose in hanging onto you to-day, Craig. You're a famous surgeon. Will you come to my rooms again? I'll tell you why I am damned."

"Yes." For suddenly I recalled the case of Bradford and his death in the Nepal jungles.

IV

THE wind rose steadily, and there was now a bit of dry snow in it. In the sky great shafts of blue-white light, queerly blunted at the far ends, swooped hither and yon, crossing and recrossing. It would be an ideal night for a visitation by the Zeppelins; and so these brilliant Cyclopean eyes searched persistently the black vault above.

When we got back to Carmichael's rooms, he threw a match into the grate, brought out whisky and soda and poured a stiff peg for himself. I shook my head as he passed the bottle toward me. No, thank you! I wanted a perfectly adjusted mental balance, for I felt it in my bones that my theories concerning prescience were about to be rudely shaken. Why? Well, because in the first place I could not doubt his sincerity; to his mind it was patently, dreadfully real—fact, not delusion. And in the second place was I conscious of a force stirring in me, a force which had lain quiescent since the days I had feared dark bedrooms.

"Sit down," he said. "I want you to sit down and let me wander about as I talk. Don't interrupt me; don't ask questions. If I could answer questions I could find cures. I know nothing; the why and wherefore are blank. There's no premonition, no forces at work to warn me of the approach of this thing.

It comes and goes; and that's all I know about it. The books I have read on the psychology of the soul! But they never lifted any curtain for me. My God, it just comes and goes! They tell me you are a great surgeon, besides being a biologist and a plague-specialist. Let me tell this thing my own way. You'll doubt it to-night; but to-morrow night—when that brave young Johnny Crapaud is dead—you'll at least realize that I'm not laboring under an hallucination. To you, two and two are always and eternally four; but they are sometimes five to me."

HE started to pour out another peg, thought better of it and began pacing, occasionally stopping before the fire, which was humming cheerily—the only companionable thing in the room at that moment.

"I am without kith or kin, happily. By that I mean I am the last of my branch. I have plenty of money. An agent manages my estate. No doubt they told you about Lieutenant Bradford, back there in India. I saw the veil on his face that morning. He called me a sun-blighted ass and would have set out alone. Good old Monty Bradford, my chum for years! Sometimes I wonder that I've kept away from whisky and drugs. The temptation is keen. And that poor chap to-night! To-morrow at this hour he will be dead. He will go to his death as certainly as you sit there with doubt in your eyes. I don't blame you. Oh, I can't foretell the hour or the manner of his death; that additional horror has been denied me. That isn't it. He may be killed at the hangars, off duty, in flight, by a far-flung shell, by heart-failure—in any one of a thousand ways. It is that I have seen the gray veil on his face, and that he is marked to die. Did you hear him laugh?"

I nodded.

"Bradford laughed. Always those I love or admire. I have even put the damnable gift to a test. I have gone into the trenches before a charge, but I never see the gray veil on the faces of strangers. It is like gazing at a face through a steaming window, through a blur of rain. Do you wonder now that I

walk alone?—longing for friendships and not daring to make them? I am a normal man, with normal cravings. My race has been uniformly clean; there's no taint in the blood or the mind. What's God's idea? To drop an opaque curtain between humanity and to-morrow, and then to leave a few pinholes for such poor devils as I to peek through!

"A mongrel dog strayed in from some ruined farmhouse—hangs about my tent. When the day's work is done, he greets me joyfully, fawns over me, licks my hands. At night, fleas and all, he snuggles close to my back and gives me the warmth of his body. I can love him without fear of seeing that damned thing on his face. A mongrel dog, the only living thing I dare love freely!

"My observer—a Belgian whose family was wiped out in the early days—knows. I have told him and promised to warn him if I see the veil on his face. He seeks death quite as earnestly as I do—an honorable death, if you please. Every morning he clicks his heels, salutes me and says ironically: 'Well, my old, do you see your veil on my face this morning?' I answer: 'No.' 'Eh, well—perhaps to-morrow. Come on!' Remember, nothing inwardly tells me that this or that person shall die. It is only when I see the veil. Each morning I look into a mirror. *For may I not see the veil on my own face?* Photographs! I have destroyed them all, for fear that even upon inanimate cardboard I may see this thing."

HE paused and stared into the fire. As for me, I sat hypnotized. It was incredible. No theory of sunstroke would hold here.

"A gray veil rests upon the face and lingers perhaps half a minute, then vanishes. I remember first seeing it when I was five. The impression is as clear to me as if it had happened yesterday. My father was starting out for the hunt. I said to my mother: 'Why does Father wear that gray veil on his face?' 'But, child, he is wearing no gray veil!' she cried. They brought him in that noon with a broken back. I was struck by the fact, even at that age, that something was wrong with me. My mother did not

recall my singular question; and her grief was so deep that I did not remind her. Such consideration at the age of five! Have you ever come across anything like that? Remember your impressions at the age of five?"

I shook my head mechanically.

"Well, with that cruel yet innocent curiosity of childhood I went about the estate, searching the faces of the servants and the villagers for further manifestations of my gift. Five years old! Why, I was wrong then. Of course there was no terror in my heart then. Terror came later, with understanding. During the four years that followed—that is, up to the age of nine—I saw the veil three times: my old nurse, the head groom and the family solicitor—all human beings I was fond of. I began to live within myself. A child!

"On the neighboring estate was my only playmate, a girl. She used to come over to my house, and I used to go over to hers. And often we played the game of war. She would be Florence Nightingale and I a Balaklava hero. I'd bring her my battered soldiers,—lead soldiers,—and she would nurse them back to life. Or it would be in the Indian Mutiny, and I'd rescue her dolls from the fiends of Cawnpore.

"When I turned fourteen I began to expand. I naturally concluded that my gift was one of those sinister things which fall to the lot of childhood and are outgrown with youth. I never told anyone. I guarded my secret well. My people were really Anglo-Indians. My grandfather went through the Mutiny under Nicholson. We were always in the Army; and my future was planned accordingly. I grew up hard and sound and normal. I entered the Army and went out to India. The girl had grown into a lovely woman; and we loved as sometimes men and women love in a poet's imagination. I have no photograph of her. Only rarely can I conjure up the face in full. Sometimes it will be her hair, burning under English sunshine, glowing under the moonshine; sometimes it will be her eyes, her lips as she smiled; but I cannot hear her voice. How I loved her! Great God, how I still love her!"

He leaned against the mantel, his head on his arm. I was the family doctor; he was baring his soul to me, blindly hoping that, wise man that I was, I might have a remedy tucked away in the folds of my brain.

"For nearly twenty years, then, I lived the life of a normal Englishman. I was tremendously alive and happy. I had everything in the world to make me happy. The thing had passed out of my life; I was a free man. Indeed, I had almost forgotten all about it. In 1910 I came home on a holiday leave. My mother and my sweetheart met me at the station. We got into the cart. I was boyishly kissing them, now one, now the other, when I saw the veil on my mother's face. God! to keep up my smiles and chatter until we reached the house! But I did it.

"Immediately after the funeral I did the only cowardly thing I have ever done. I stole away. I took the first ship out. I did not even write to explain. I simply vanished out of the girl's life. Marry her, live with her and watch her face from day to day, in endless, damnable terror? I could not. I'd have gone mad and made away with myself.

"And so I set forth each day, as honorably as I may, to seek the hand of Death. And Death mocks me and pins medals for valor on my breast!"

What could I say in the face of such despair? Of what avail human surgery? I got up and went over to a window, pushed back the curtains and stared at the swinging shafts of light. And I remained there until I felt his hand upon my shoulder.

"I have told you my story because they tell me you are a great surgeon, that with trepanning you can take out the criminal instinct from a human brain."

I caught the drift. "That," I had to answer, "is because criminal instinct is a human instinct, and this thing of yours is supernatural. What can I say to you? Nothing. For I have given my years to facts and the evolution of facts; and your story to me is beyond the pale of facts. I am principally an anatomist, a biologist."

They were all staring at me as if I were an angel with wings or a devil with horns.



"You don't believe it?"

"I want to believe it."

"If that young Frenchman dies tomorrow?"

"Then I'll have to believe it. Carmichael, I'd do anything in the world to help you, but I'm helpless in the face of this."

"A dog, a homeless, mongrel dog! So be it. One thing more, my friend. Here are two keys. One opens the door and the other opens that desk yonder. I have duplicates. In that desk is a letter. It contains my story. The envelope is addressed. I want her to know only after I'm dead. When the day comes that they pick me up badly smashed, dying or dead, you will be notified; and you

will come here and get this envelope and take it to her."

"I promise that."

"And if I'm only smashed, with a chance, will you let them take me to your hospital?"

"I promise that too."

TEN days ago he and his Belgian were caught in a trap. Three Fokkers pursued and caught them. They made the Germans pay dearly. They fell fully a thousand feet. The Belgian was already dead, riddled. He had found *his* way out. But such was Carmichael's skill as a pilot that he managed to land without being killed. Not a bullet had touched him, but he was

smashed—both legs broken, ribs bent in, shoulder dislocated and collarbone cracked. He is in my hospital now. He confessed to me that the veil had appeared on the face of his Belgian friend that morning, and he took it for granted that he was to die also.

He'll live. But he will hobble through the rest of his days on a cane. He thinks he will get back to the front, and I haven't had the heart to disillusion him.

A gray veil! Can you imagine it? Can any normal-minded human being imagine it? When that young Frenchman of the restaurant-scene was reported dead, I knew. But knew what? Nothing. I shall never know anything about it. So I call it the white corner of his soul, because I can't think of anything else to call it.

V

AS I finished my tale, I laid down the spoon and reached for my goblet of water, slyly eying my friends over the rim. Every face was tense, and they were all staring at me as if I were an angel with wings or a devil with horns. As my eye caught Glorianna's, she rose. Ah, but she was lovely! Her eyes were like stars on wimpling water, and I now know what the poet meant when he spoke of the glory which shines outwardly from within.

"Doctor," she said, "will you come with me to the terrace?"

I followed her mutely through the glass door. None of the others stirred; but I heard a deep sigh. We paused by the terrace wall, under the kindly May moon, and the air was sweet and heavy with box and honeysuckle.

"When you spoke his name, I was afraid some one would interrupt you. I wanted to hear it all, from you, just as he told it. Do you understand?"

"You are—"

"I am the Florence Nightingale of his childhood, and he is my Balaklava

hero, always and ever my hero. For more than five years I have lived in proud and bitter wonderment. Not a line, not a word of any kind. How should I dream that *this* was it? How he must have suffered! And how we have all misjudged him! For what was more natural than that I should believe he had suddenly tired of me, that there was another? Arthur Carmichael, the bravest of the brave, and all these years he has been *mine*!" She raised her face toward the sky, exultantly. "But I ought not to have doubted. Did I not know him, the soul of honor? And so he has tried to fight it out all, all alone; and when he did die, to give his life for his country! Oh, Doctor Gordon Craig, you will take me to him?"

"To-morrow!"

"Where is his dog, the mongrel that was all he had to love?"

"I have him."

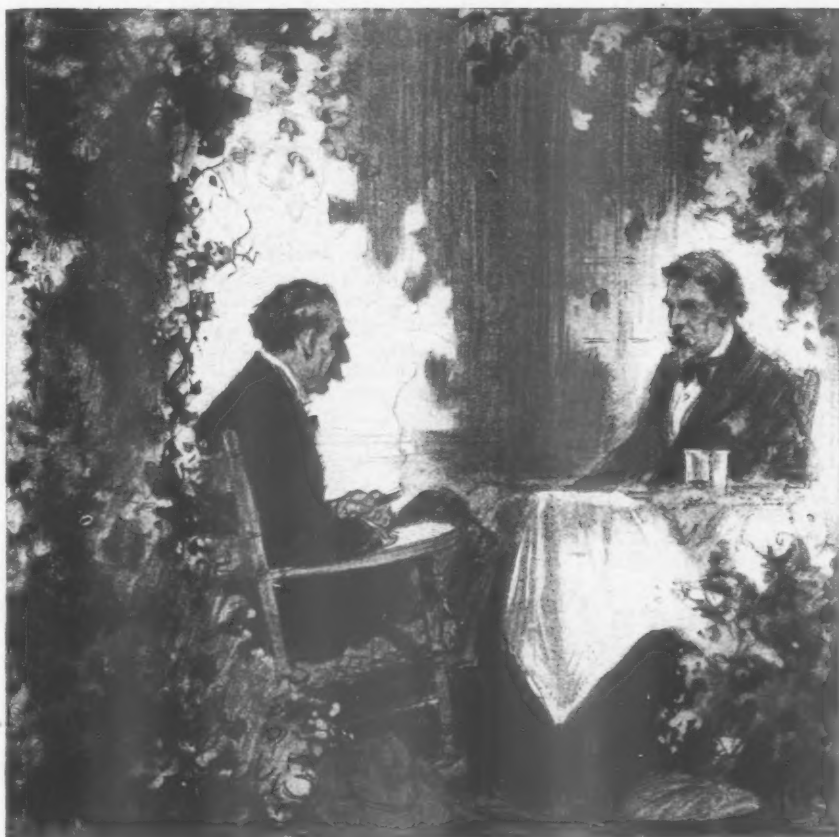
I smiled; and she caught my hands and pressed them with incredible strength. I was feeling extraordinarily happy. What if I had broken a promise? The end justified the means. I could secretly return the letter I had brought, against the possibility that she might no longer care. The ethics of that adventure lay between me and God. There is only one real happiness in this world, and that is making other people happy.

Glorianna suddenly dropped my hands and did something that made me catch my breath for the sheer beauty and abandon of it. She turned and flung out her bare arms toward brave, unhappy France.

"My lover! Oh, rest easy this night, for I shall mend your broken heart and your broken bones with the power of my love. . . . As I used to mend your broken soldiers! And if your strange veil of death shall cover my face some day, think, think of the hours and days of happiness and love that shall abide between!"

Somehow, in that moment, I knew that science was only a detail, a minor detail.

Stories by Harold MacGrath are to be a feature of The Red Book Magazine.
Another will appear in an early issue.



Quick on The Trigger

A Blue-Grass
Love Story

By Maria
Thompson Daviess

Author of "The Daredevil," "The
Melting of Molly," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY
R. F. JAMES

LOVE that is very quick on the trigger may blaze down into an extremely steady and comfortable altar-fire by which whole families can worship and warm. It often acts in such a manner down in the blue-grass country. In a land where girls are husky, tender of eyes and take fire easily, and where the men always keep their courtship-tinder dry, could one expect a tedious and decorous variety of love to flourish and flower, even in very stately old great-grandmother gardens? It doesn't. Also a good, quick blaze of love often burns up a lot of rubbish in the situation—our great feud, for instance.

The conflagration was after this manner, and things happened to me in the only possible way, considering Father's

temperament and obsolete traditions.

"A gentleman should live life with a leisurely intensity," I heard him remark just before the crowning eruption of his disposition—when, with a great flourish, he handed the keys of Mayes Mansion to his creditors and betook himself and me down into this little cottage in the garden-orchard of his forefathers.

Then an awful year passed by for me.

"It is all right," I pleaded earnestly at the end of the long year, "for a man to flaunt his pride like a decoration on his coat-sleeve, but a woman's instinct makes her fold hers into her vitals and cover it with patched finery. Couldn't you forgive Colonel Merriweather this time and be more severe with him some day when money is not involved?" I was sitting beside him on the porch, strengthening breaches in my last year garments—through which I had motored and tennised and danced while he had sat on the front porch of the cottage, entertaining mutual friends and advocates of the Colonel by displays of his disposition, which was becoming as gnarled as the old apple trees into which he had retired.

"Blast him," Father answered; "if he hadn't crowed that 'I told you so' at me, I might have let him arrange that compromise with those dirt-robbers; but no, madam, no man can rejoice at my downfall while pouring wine into my wounds! Let him pass along on the other side of the road wrapped in his own prosperity, and let my poverty alone." And some such kindly expression was the answer Father always gave me to one of the Colonel's overtures—which arrived about every other day and which I always faithfully and fearfully presented. Life to the dear, placid old Colonel lacked all flavor of picturesqueness without Father; and Father's love for the Colonel was his most precious possession, which he had all his life placed in jeopardy whenever it interested him to indulge in a quarrel. The immediate cause of this last estrangement was the fact that the Colonel had taken a controlling lot of stock in the phosphate company that had bought the phosphate rights for Father's whole five-

hundred-acre farm for just about enough money to settle Father's accumulation of debts. He had dreamily failed to realize that the getting of the phosphate would take all the cream of the land and make it utterly worthless—failed to realize it, that is, until the bank refused to lend him any more money on his land and showed him just how he was in a condition of bankruptcy. Father had dramatically paid every creditor in full with the sum from the phosphate company and was preparing spectacularly to enter into poverty, when the Colonel just as dramatically forced his company to observe an ambiguous clause in the contract,—a clause which would never have held in a court of law,—which called for a royalty to Father on every bushel of the treasure mined, and which would give him a perfectly comfortable fortune.

"Now, I hope you'll never sign any kind of paper again without consulting me. You got out of this loss by the skin of your teeth, and by the fact that those fellows want my farm, which is as rich as yours in phosphate, and don't dare fight me in the matter. They'd have a good chance to get past that clause if I'd let 'em. I am thankful to be able to save you once again, Mayes, and I'll have to continue doing it until we pass on to heaven together." The darling Colonel was so happy and jubilant over the outcome of his fight for Father that he brought the storm down upon his head before he realized it.

"I refuse the funds obtained by enforcement of a clause which the law might not have sustained if given the chance, and I bid you good morning until that moment of eternity which you suggest that we will meet together. I hope you will not then advise me about entering my eternal home. Again good morning, sir!" These were the kind and grateful words that Father had used in expressing what should have been his gratitude to the devoted Colonel. With which he had walked away to the bank and proceeded to settle his affairs, and himself and me into poverty in the cottage. Father never had been poor before, and he enjoyed the sensation. Also it continued to appeal to his dramatic

sense to live with extreme simplicity in the cottage, while the royalties of the phosphate piled up in the bank, a monthly statement of which incredible amounts the Colonel sent him, each time with an affectionate appeal for forgiveness and reinstatement.

"But Colonel Merriweather has loved us for generations, and we have him. It's been a whole year, and I'm hungry for him," I pleaded, for I loved the Colonel devotedly and it was difficult for me to live with only stolen interviews, as I had been immediately put under command to ignore him.

"He has lost all claim to my friendship, madam, by his course of interference, which has lasted since he dragged me out of the whirlpool in Caney Fork rapids at our tenth years. Of course, I was drowning; but what right has he had to say all these years since, every time we talk over the matter, that he told me that pool was treacherous? Why, blast him, he has had the impudence to twit me for over two decades with the fact that I married your mother with the ring hurriedly taken off his wife's finger at the altar, because I had insisted on providing my own marital circle when he advised me to let him attend to the matter. In the confusion of the hour I very naturally left it in my room. No, I've had the last twit from Merriweather, and you had better get to your household duties, while I read the mail and hunt out that bit of Tom Moore I was quoting yesterday."

SEEING the utter hopelessness of argument, I folded my pride into my breast under my gingham apron and went back to the kitchen to take out my anguish by helping Mammy Kitty with the breakfast dishes. She has feebly stuck by us, but Father's spectacular retreat into poverty has had the effect on me of very nearly making a first-class kitchen-mechanic out of a very useless fine lady. The whole town has mourned over me, but I have kept fairly cheerful over my downfall—or evolution, whichever way is better to put it—until this last month, when Father retreated further into circumstances that are strait-

ened, and ordered all my social pleasures to cease.

My nature requires a certain amount of dancing, and I felt, as I carefully polished off a genuine old willow-ware plate which the poverty-stricken ought not to possess, that my time to explode had about come. And as that moment arrived, Evelyn Lee came also. Satan always knows just when a woman's principles have worn to a frazzle. And I had always been such a dutiful daughter under great difficulties!

"Oh, Patricia Mayes, how are you ever going to live, *live*, if the Major persists in being poor like this?" she moaned as she attacked a long rent in my tennis skirt with a needle as big as a dagger and very fine thread, after we had seated ourselves on the side porch in the midst of a pile of my toilet wreckage, which I had started in to patch. Evelyn can only sew with that exact assortment of instruments, and Mammy Kitty always remonstrates with her for sewing with "a red-hot needle and a burning thread." I often regret her kindly assistance, though I accept it whenever it's offered.

"The only thing that could help me in the least after all this hard work would be a good strengthening dance, and if I don't get it, I shall—shall starve," I answered, giving vent to the sniffle that I had been restraining all morning.

"You poor dear, you shall have it," answered Evelyn with her head in the air. "I shall go and demand it of the Major—that is, I shall coax it out of him," she added a trifle limply. Father is deeply fond of Evelyn, and so he rages at her at all times with perfect courtesy.

I sat and awaited the result of the encounter with apprehension.

"It was terrific," she exclaimed as she came back around the house and sank exhausted on the step beside me. "The only fragment I could pick up was permission for you to come up home to supper to cheer up Mother, after her spell of laryngitis. I didn't think it was necessary to tell him that after you've done your consolation-act it is most likely that I will have in as many of the men as I can get together, and take up the rugs in the long parlor. He didn't give me a chance to tell him that."



"I think it is an outrage for you to come home and spoil my dance when I haven't had one for over a month. Why couldn't you wait and come home next week or next month or next year?" I snapped resentfully.

"Eve, you are wonderful!" I exclaimed in admiration. "I would never in the world disobey my father, and it is so much better for him not to know little things that would trouble him. Anyway, why shouldn't the poor dance, just in parlors, quietly? How many men can you get together at short notice?"

"All of them," she answered positively. "I'll leave all that to Brother Preston; he's got a new step he's been dying to teach you—it's too dangerous for an ordinary mortal. I'll go find him right now, so he'll have time to sober

up the negroes in the band. Indeed, you shall have all the nourishing dancing you need from now on, to keep you alive for this terrible life-work you have to undertake for the Major. Come up early. Jimmy Shelby will meet you with his new runabout—behind the orchard, so as not to disturb the Major—and bring you. Good-by!" As she talked, Evelyn snatched her tennis-racket and a kiss and departed with encouraging energy.

As Evelyn is a woman of her word, I knew I could trust her to rescue me in



"Seven long years
—in Calcutta—
keeping a heart
clean enough to
house a scraggy
kid of a girl, and
then—" came in
an indignant voice
from the other
side of the wide
steps.

great style, and so I worked hard for the next two hours in the best of spirits and against all discouragements. Who couldn't forget a tea-cake that fell flat, over the exhilarating effect of planning a new fox-trot that involved each foot in two separate maneuvers at the same time—and no fair to cling to your partner, because he is doing the same?

WHY is it that a joy that you are looking forward to seems so wonderful if snatched from you just as you reach out your hand to grasp it? The way

Satan works is to let you get just one joy-slide and a turn—and stop the music when you are poised for a glorious dip; it makes you willing to commit murder in order to have the rest of the dance. I felt so sorry for myself at about six o'clock in the afternoon that I did violence to my own conscience, in the following manner:

After I had helped make a tidy toilet of all the dinner dishes and failed on the tea-cake, to Mammy's augmented misery, I spent several hours ironing out all the real lace ruffles in my possession,

from skin out. I haven't been poor long enough to wear just a plain little muslin slip and a rose in my hair, and nobody in town has as yet anything to match the handful of filmy French embroidery and Valenciennes lace in whose coolness I danced all last spring. A woman in a side-street in New York made it behind closed doors, and another like it hasn't yet been born into existence, though it is a year old and has to be patched at every appearance. It took a powerful card of introduction and much wheedling on my part to get it out of her, for the consideration of a paltry three-figure check. I wonder what she would have thought if she had caught a glimpse of me out on the kitchen porch refreshing the lace with a large and prosaic flatiron?

I had just taken the cooling iron off the last inch of shimmering blue girdle—which was the only thing in the world I had to depend upon to hold me and the dress together—when the cruel blow was delivered that blotted out the bright afternoon sun.

"A final insult, madam, from my enemy Merriweather," exploded Father as he came around the cottage by the patch from the front porch. "It seems Beverly Merriweather has arrived from Calcutta, and is to be initiated into the mysteries of a cavort at the Country Club to-night, and Merriweather suggests that I 'bury the hatchet' and bring you for the ceremony. Not while my head is hot shall my daughter bestow the honor of a dance with her upon that traveling jackanapes. We'll both go to bed at eight o'clock and put out all lights in contempt for their merrymaking. I hope that at least some of the foolish revelers will pass my humble abode."

"Oh, but Father," I gasped in dismay at this treacherous going-wrong of my dance. How could Evelyn have run such a risk as to have this rescue of me given in Beverly Merriweather's honor? Still, how could she guess that Colonel Merriweather would invite Father?

"Not a word, madam," stormed Father, as a tear fell from my eyes and sizzled on the iron in my hand. "I now see that delightful minx's scheme. I

have dispatched my answer to Merriweather, and your supper excuses to your lovely confederate. The lights shall go out in my residence at eight o'clock sharp." Having delivered this ultimatum, he retreated before I could form a suitable plea.

Not go to the dance! I ran my hand over the fluffy darling on the ironing-board, set down the iron, sank on the top step, buried my head in my arms and gave up to a pitiful despair. And at that minute I never hated any being in all the world as I did Beverly Merriweather. It had been seven years since I had seen the monster, but I shuddered with horror at myself as I called up to my memory's eye our last interview.

I was an unlovely thirteen and had never experienced a kiss until he had been forced to bestow that attention upon me in order to extricate himself from the wild tangle of my long arms and hair, as I clung to him at parting and refused to be dislodged until I felt on the back of my neck the wet splash and pressure which even in my inexperience I knew to be a kiss. It comforted me, as well as frightened me into allowing myself to be shaken off. I have been discovering, as the years have gone by, just how kind that kiss was, under the unattractive circumstances.

Calcutta is a long way from the bluegrass region of Kentucky, seven years long, in this case. For the first year or two the firm that had sent Beverly out into the Far East had failed to establish the claims made for its thoroughbred mules and horses, and had then so thoroughly established them that business and fortune had come well-nigh to swamping Beverly and exiling him forever. I had practically forgot about him, and here he had swooped down out of the ether and destroyed my dance! It was more than I could bear, and I sobbed aloud to the lilac-bush by the step and to the rose-vine over the windows. And as I realized that I was to have no other outlet, I settled down to one glorious cry.

While I sat huddled deep in a sea of trouble, with billows of real lace frothing over my head, the sun retired over behind the orchard to put on a garment

of pink cloud; then a pale star came out and buttoned together the purple curtains of the night, which were just showing an embroidery of fireflies, while the entire garden began to array itself in wisps of gauzy mist. There I sat in a smudgy gingham apron and wept.

THEN, just as the whole world was taking its departure behind the dark of the purple night to keep evening engagements, somebody sat down on the step beside me and drew me into a soft embrace.

"Haven't you got over crying about me in all these seven years, kiddie?" a nice, crisp, jolly voice joked as I felt a tentative kiss just back of my ear and three inches to the left of the seven-year-old one.

"Don't!" I gasped, drawing away with great emphasis. "I'm twenty years old, and I hate you, Bev Merriweather!"

"Well, that's a nice little welcome home," he answered as I haughtily withdrew to the other side of the steps. "Since when?"

"There's a—a feud in our families and—and—" I was declaiming vigorously between the gulps of a belated sob that had to get out of my throat.

"So they are still at it in old Kentuck?" the crisp voice interrupted laughingly. "I've only been here an hour, and so haven't yet been involved. I just took time to untog and tog before I hunted for you. I felt that I needed what was left of those—those attentions—er—that—I beg your pardon for mentioning your youthful indiscretions, now that you are twenty and have a feud on with me."

"I don't care at all about the phosphate Father and the Colonel are fighting over. I feel that the Colonel has a right to save Father's fortune if he wants to, but I think it is an outrage for you to come home and spoil my dance when I haven't had one for over a month. Why couldn't you wait and come home next week or next month or next year?" I snapped resentfully, as a maddlesome little breeze blew against my cheek the long blue-silk streamer from the froth above my head.

"Seven long years—in Calcutta—keeping a heart clean enough to house a scraggy kid of a girl, and then—" came in an indignant voice from the other side of the wide steps. Then the returned wanderer rose to his six feet, stepped down on the gravel path that led to the gate between a row of nodding, dew-sprinkled peonies, paused for a queer tight-breathed second and was gone out behind the doors of night as quickly as he had come through.

For a moment I sat still; then my temper waked up and rose in good earnest. . . . "Scraggy!"

The word burned itself into my pride. It was cruel, under the circumstances. I ran my left hand down my satin-smooth, round right arm and made up my mind to go to that dance if it meant war to the knife with Father. I had never defied him before, and I was well frightened, but no man alive could call me "scraggy" in the dark and be allowed to escape a sight of me in the light!

And thus I sprouted a branch of the feud on my own account.

AFTER making my terrifying decision, I sat still for a few minutes and considerably planned to outmaneuver Father rather than come to open war. He had declared lights out at eight, and I felt that as far as that, it would be well for me to follow his commands, as my campaign could begin at a much later hour. Then if he heard about it afterwards, we could resort to conflict, terrible as it would be. But go I must!

"Patricia, I should like a simple repast before we retire. It is seven o'clock," came Father's voice from the edge of the front porch, bristling with authority, just as I had finished planning my campaign of insubordination.

"Yes, sir, I'll bring in your milk-toast and egg right away," I answered with cheerful alacrity. After which dutiful reply I took up the fluff from the ironing-board and retired with it to my room. While there I took time to shake out my chestnut mane, pile it high and pull down two beau-catchers on one side of my face and one on the other. They set much better if dabbed in place



I cut through
the grove at the
beginning of
the club
grounds.

on the cheek with a dash of rose oil an hour or two before they are to be used. Then I retreated to the kitchen and assisted in preparing a triumph in the way of a simple supper for an old fire-eater.

"And concerning the matter of young Merriweather, Patricia; I have decided it will be best for us both to ignore him in any chance meeting that may occur." Father pronounced with the last spoonful of milk. "Good night, my daughter! How remarkably like your mother you look to-night, with those curls flattened against your face in that manner. I seem to recall that such locks had a very frivolous name in those days."

"Beau-catchers," I reminded him as I began a hasty shuffle of the dishes in the direction of the kitchen.

"Well, you'll not need them to-night—nor do you at any time, my dear," he answered with a mixture of compliment and belligerency in his voice as he retired into his room. "I hope you will bring your household tasks to completion immediately, so that you may be in bed slightly before eight o'clock," was

the last shot fired as he closed his door.

"How pleased Father would have been if he had happened on the kitchen porch at about six-thirty and seen that seven-year hold-over love-scene with the enemy," I giggled to myself as I wiped the last plate. I couldn't remember the time when Father hadn't adored Bev' Merriweather, and it was little over a year ago that I had been forced to read ten pages of *The Grange Journal* about what Bev' had done in the Far East with the ugly blooded mules and his string of



thoroughbred horses. A Khedive and a Sheik had been his guests at his farm outside of Calcutta, and I thought Father would scarcely be able to stand this honor to the beloved even at a distance of five thousand miles. And neither he nor I was to acknowledge the existence of the hero if we met him in the big road!

"The Mayes' welcome that is being handed Beverly Merriweather is what I'd call a sad and frosted confection. He'll find his cake is dough with us," I remarked to myself as I tiptoed to my room. And while I addressed myself in a whisper, I smiled defiantly into the mirror as I heard the key turn positively in my lock. Then I began to hum one of the dance-tunes with which the devil had been tempting me for hours—that is, it may have been he or it may not. It takes a wise person justly to judge Satan and his works, and I've decided never to try again. Just suppose I hadn't been led to that dance, whoever it was that did it!

IN planning my wickedness, I had forgotten one thing: how would I get to the dance? Father's note to Evelyn would settle the matter of anybody's coming for me, and how could I go alone all that way at night?

For about two seconds I hesitated at the orchard gate, trembling weakly; then I reefed my ruffles close in around my ankles and took to the open road, a mile down which lay the Country Club where my dance was being held without me and which contained a man who had denied my charms—in ignorance.

My flight was rapid. Ghostly clumps of blooming dogwood hung over the stone walls, from first one side and then the other of the pike; and tall oak trees cast deep, black shadows across the way in the light from the moon that had risen over the blue-grass meadows in which drowsy cattle huddled or lay at rest. A tall, slim old locust showered sweet buds down on my head, and from a stark dead tree down the road, an angry owl hooted

defiance at me. But right on I ran, the white turnpike-dust grinding into my blue-satin slippers.

Finally I cut through the beech grove at the beginning of the Club grounds, crossed the golf-course, and arrived flushed and panting on the side steps of the Club in a crowd of girls and men who were out drinking punch and moonlight while the band inside got its breath and did likewise.

"Oh Pat, darling, how did you get here?" gasped Evelyn, as she clasped me in her arms. "Jimmy Shelby has been scouting around the cottage for hours, but he said the lights were all out and he was deathly afraid to wake the Major after those awful letters to Colonel Merriweather and me. We thought he must have had you locked up. Jimmy was just going again to see."

"It would take more than a lock and key to keep me from my own benefit dance, even if you did try to give it away to somebody else, Evelyn Lee," I snapped agreeably in answer as the others began to swarm and buzz about me.

"You brave darling," exclaimed Sue Redford as she hugged me with a shiver. "I don't know which I would be the most afraid of, the dear Major or that owl that hooted at Price Warren and me as we came by the dead tree."

"Somebody call in Jimmy; and now that the queen has come, let the dance begin," ordered Preston Lee as the band started the most delicious fox, with a rich African flavor, while they all trooped back through the doors and long windows into the ballroom. Preston was redolent as to breath, of the julep he had just had at the bar, and he was swaying as to legs as he stood in front of me and held out his arms. "Come on and dance with me, Patsy."

I was cold, I hated him so; but I hardly knew how to answer him to keep him from some sort of surly outbreak. He begins to drink at six o'clock sharp every evening, and by nine he is not the gentleman he was born, by a great many degrees. The men and the governors of the Club are all distressed over him, and lenient with him on account of his grand old father, who was one of the founders of the Club right after the



Preston Lee, staggering, white and disheveled, stood in the window, and in his wavering, outstretched hand he held a bright-barreled pistol—waiting, I knew instinctively, for Beverly to turn me out of range and expose himself for the shot.



War; but he has been getting worse by the week and month. The women tolerate and are good to him because we all love Evelyn, and for her sake I was loath to make a scene. I could see her dancing happily with Price down the ballroom; so I just stood paralyzed for a long moment and wondered what I should do.

"Come on," he ordered peremptorily.

Just at that desperate minute a long, firm hand was laid on my arm and the crisp, pleasant voice that had set off my

temper out on my side steps a few hours past, broke into the situation.

"Pres', old fellow, let me have this first one with Patricia, wont you—just as a welcoming attention?" There was a note of sympathetic tenderness in his voice as he spoke to poor Preston that ought to have melted any situation, however tense. But Preston was beyond any human impulse, and he swayed as he looked Beverly up and down insolently.

"You can have it if you want it. She's just out of the lock-up, and I'm not



We were dancing on the edge of the crowd half-way down the ballroom, and his arms had tightened around me for a long side-swing both together, when over my shoulder I caught a glimpse of something that stilled all the blood in my body.

looking for trouble; but you look out for old Major Mayes. The old fool has got your dad side-stepping behind every tree as he comes down the street, already. Funny if you both tried the same tree at the same time—funny, eh?" And he chortled with glee at the cleverness of his double insult.

For a second I stood cold and straight, and in my anger I verily believe my feminine hand went to the place of my hereditary masculine hip pocket; then a low, good-humored laugh broke

across my tense nerves and I saw Beverly Merriweather reach out from my side, take Preston up by his collar, walk out the window and carefully drop him over the railing of the porch into a fragrant geranium-bed.

It was done so quickly that nobody but me had time to see it, and before I could more than get my breath, Beverly was back with me, dusting his hands with his handkerchief and not so much as a hair of his sleek red-brown head ruffled. The music rocked and glided

and mocked and called, as we stood looking at each other.

"Please, loveliest girl with a curl—I'll be good, and remember the twenty years." He held out his arms and drew me in with his eyes and his voice and that face-wide teasing smile that had conquered me many a time in extreme youth and against which I was helpless. So I braced my arms in his, and he swung me out into the sea of dance.

"Oh, I'm ashamed of Preston—and—and the feud too. The Colonel is so good to Father, and—and—" I gasped as he turned me against his left shoulder and anchored me close for a long slide.

"Forget it all and come back with me—seven years," he said with a low laugh as he lowered me on his arm and bent above me for a second as we slid. "The Colonel has been writing me about all this loveliness for three years, and let me be happy now that I've got it—for a dance at least—before the feud breaks over my head."

"*Scraddy* was the word you used not three hours ago," I answered with dignity, withdrawing myself a quarter of an inch from him at a dangerous crisis, so that he had to fairly snatch me to him to avoid a collision.

"Well, we can't do 'em both at the same time, feud and fox-trot," he answered as he steadied me past the danger of a crash. And as he held me close and laughed down into my eyes, I was again thirteen and clinging grief-stricken in his patient, comforting arms. The seven years syncopated themselves from between us, and I began to nuzzle against his shoulder as I had always done in times of either joy or sorrow or any special excitement.

And then gunpowder blew up the whole situation.

WE were dancing on the edge of the crowd halfway down the ballroom, just exactly opposite the window through which he had so gently evicted Preston, and his arms had tightened around me for a long side-swing both together, when over my shoulder I caught a glimpse of something that at first stilled all the blood in my body and then sent

it rushing back to my heart with hot terror. Preston Lee, staggering, white and disheveled, stood in the window, and in his wavering, outstretched hand he held a bright-barreled pistol—waiting, I knew instinctively, for Beverly to turn me out of range and expose himself for the shot.

As long as my lace-clad, clinging body was between him and the drink-crazed man, I felt that he might be safe. Even if Preston shot before we turned, then my vitals protected Beverly's; but if I could keep him waiting a few seconds for me to be out of range before he poured the lead into Beverly, somebody near him surely would see and strike up the pistol in time. I knew that I must keep Beverly from turning me and himself so he could see the danger for the few seconds it would take for somebody near to see and save us; but in any case—my life for his.

"My life for his," I prayed, reaching out for aid I had never asked before and getting it as my heart in my breast swelled with courage and began to clamor against his. I held him to me steadily with never a turn, and he looked down at me as if puzzled for an instant; then the light that was in my heart blazed all over his face, and he was mine to save—or lose.

"Bev," I whispered as I raised my face from his shoulder and pressed it against his cheek so that he couldn't turn his head toward the death over at the window, "I'm not twenty; I'm two and a half: so please rock me to this music a minute until I get my breath. Don't turn me any more; you've turned my head."

"And you've turned my heart, kiddie," he laughed low in his throat as he took his steps slowly in half measure and literally rocked me against his breast as he crooned the melody of the dance in my ear against his lips. "You didn't mean that welcome out there three hours ago, did you? This"—his arm slid up tighter across my shoulders—"is the real thing, isn't it? We'll soothe the old boys and—"

Then it happened, but the God-given, love-born courage in my heart kept my muscles in my body taut and gave me

the strength to whirl him around and to spread up and across him. I had seen the wavering pistol suddenly steady itself, the drunken man take deliberate aim and press the trigger—but not before a gray-haired, disheveled catapult had shot across the porch and struck up the weapon the fraction of an inch it took to send the ball through my arm raised to Beverly's throat instead of through his heart.

Father had pursued me to the scene of revelry and gone into immediate action.

THE ballroom was in an uproar of clashing music and anxious voices.

Under the circumstances one would think Beverly and I would be the heroes of the hour, as he stood stupefied and held me sobbing and clinging in his arms; but we were not.

Colonel Merriweather met Father halfway in the middle of the floor, and they clinched with such unmistakable fervor that the horrified dancers stood petrified with astonishment while one negro fiddler sawed nervously on at the dance refrain after the others had stopped.

A genuine feud in the blue-grass country is a matter of the greatest importance and danger to the community in which it exists, and this one was being acted out in the center of the stage. Most of the audience who had half heard the pistol-shot, thought the two old fire-eaters were locked in a death struggle, and there was a general movement to separate them, which was halted in confusion the next moment.

"My God, Mayes, dear old friend, you saved them both. There's not a man of your agility of mind and body in Kentucky to-day," said the Colonel as he wrung Father's hand and patted him on the shoulder, while Father clung to him

and did likewise to the Colonel's white-silk-coated back.

"You'd have beat me to it, Merriweather, boy, if you had been nearer," answered Father, with a deeply-buried-hatchet note in his voice. "But don't you ever twit me with the fact that I couldn't keep my girl away from your boy. Just look at them, after I had locked her up!" And he glared at me as I cowered in Bev's arms.

The whole assembly of friends gave vent to their delight and overwrought nerves in a laugh, and again the music started. Preston had been made 'way with by Jimmy Shelby; nobody realized how badly wounded I was—and what's a pistol-shot in even the modern Dark and Bloody Ground?

"**W**E had to let a little blood to heal that feud—in old Kentucky, didn't we? We might have had to wait weeks if gunpowder hadn't blown us together to-night," I whispered to Beverly as he knelt by my bed with my head on his arm after the doctor had taken out the awful bullet and swathed me in bandages. We could hear Father and the Colonel outside the window on the porch arguing heatedly about the limit to be set on the still larger amount of royalties to be extracted from the phosphate company by the Colonel for Father, and I felt it was a good family altar-fire that pistol had lighted for me.

"My God, a woman's pluck!" answered Beverly, carefully nestling his cheek to mine and choking against it with unnecessary emotion. "It was my life or yours, and—"

"How long will it be before I can fox-trot again?" I interrupted him to ask, with the natural rebound of a woman bred in blue-grass meadows and acquainted with strife—and also with love.

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A Lesson For Somebody

By Elliott Flower



ERNEST BRAND said "I forbid it!" when he should have said "I wish you wouldn't."

A man of wider experience with women probably would not have made this mistake, but Ernest had possessed a wife less than two years, and that is an extremely short time in which to learn the finer points of the matrimonial game, especially for a man. So Ernest Brand said "I forbid it!" and the result was not at all what he expected.

Elsie, his wife, was such a demure and docile little woman that he had become obsessed with a keen and masterful sense of responsibility. She needed some one to guide and protect her, and he was the one to do it, of course. He had done it ever since the day he slipped the ring on her finger, and she had seemed to wish it so; but he quite overlooked the fact that he never before had done it in this arbitrary way.

"Forbid what?" she asked.

"This fool outing of a lot of unprotected women," he replied.

"I don't see what you have to say about it," she rejoined, "if I don't go."

He realized then that he had jumped to conclusions, and that is always an unpleasant discovery when the conclusions prove to be wrong. She had merely mentioned a proposed Adamless outing

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RAEBURN VAN BUREN

of some of her girl friends in one of the summer cottages that lined the river above and below the town, but that she was going with them was a natural inference.

"Oh, well," he said rather sheepishly, "if you're not going—"

"But I am going," she interrupted.

This was not at all like Elsie, and it puzzled and irritated him.

"Why shouldn't I go?" she persisted. "Didn't you go on a week's fishing trip? And why shouldn't women get away together just the same as men?"

"Because they're women," he replied.

"That's no reason," she argued.

"Anyhow, I forbid it," he declared emphatically, "—positively forbid it."

That was another mistake. To forbid it was bad enough, but positively to forbid it was worse.

"What are you going to do," she asked, "—lock me up?"

"That will not be necessary," he replied confidently. "You have promised—"

"I know," she interrupted, "but it was long ago decided that the 'obey' is in the marriage service only for decorative effect."

No, this was not at all like Elsie, but neither was a repetition of that positive injunction at all like Ernest.

"The girls have asked me to chaperon them," she said, "and I shall go."

"Chaperon them!" he scoffed. "A girl like you! Why, you're younger than many of your unmarried friends. And Elsie," he added sternly, "you'll regret it if you go!"

A threat! That was another mistake.

"I shall go," she said again.

And she went.

IT was then up to Ernest to make his threat good. He simply had to do it as matters of both principle and pride. Elsie must be made to see that he was wise and masterful. She must be brought home penitent.

His closest friend, Roy Curtis, agreed with him. Roy was not married himself, but like most bachelors, he knew all about women.

"If you let her get away with this," said Roy, "she'll soon have you edged entirely away from the steering-wheel of the matrimonial machine. It's got to be settled right now who's chauffeur."

This seemed reasonable to Ernest, but he was uncertain how it was to be done. Roy thought that a very simple matter.

"Go up to the cottage," advised Roy, "and bring her home. Rope her and tie her, if necessary, but bring her home."

"But I can't be rough with her!" objected Ernest. "She's such a helpless little thing."

"So helpless," scoffed Roy, "that she's got you all tied up in a knot right now, and that's how you'll stay to the end of time if you don't win this scrap."

"I don't like that word," frowned Ernest. "Elsie and I never scrap."

"Call it what you like," conceded Roy, "but here's a clash that's got to be handled right if you don't want to be trailing an apron all the rest of your life."

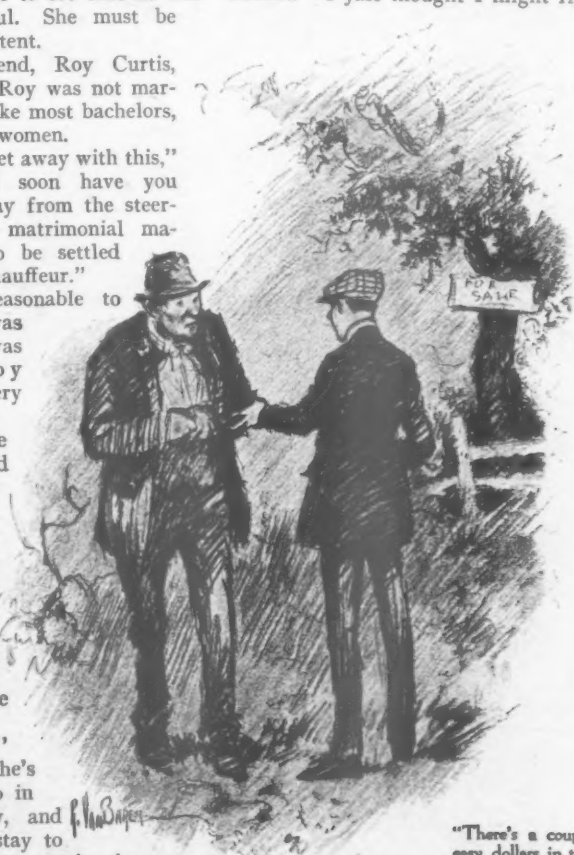
"Oh, of course," agreed Ernest.

"These quiet ones," pursued Roy out of his wide inexperience, "are the worst when they do break loose."

"I wonder," mused Ernest, "how it would do to give her a good scare."

"Now, now, none of that going-away-to-war foolishness," cautioned Roy. "It's played out."

"Good heavens, no!" exclaimed Ernest. "I just thought I might rig up



"There's a couple of easy dollars in this for you, Bill," he said.

"Police station," suggested Roy.

"Good idea," acquiesced Ernest.
"You'll come along, of course."

"Not me," returned Roy promptly.
"Any time I want to mix up in a family frolic I'll get a family of my own. I'm a good little adviser, but I don't get on the firing-line."

SO Ernest went alone to the police station, where he startled the desk-sergeant by asking if he could borrow a tramp.

"A tramp!" exclaimed the sergeant.
"Borry a tramp! Are you nutty?"

Ernest assured him that he was not, but that he had need of a tramp.

"Well, I thought I'd had everything that was foolish put up to me," said the bewildered sergeant, "but it's the first time I ever was asked f'r the loan of a tramp. What d'you want of him?"

"I want to give him employment," answered Ernest.

"Clean daffy," reflected the sergeant.
"One of these guys with a reform bug, likely." He shook his head with the air of a man who had come upon a problem that was altogether too deep for him.
"Well," he finally ventured, "I got one here that could be turned loose without makin' any trouble, seein' he aint been booked, but he wont work."

"I'll risk that," returned Ernest. "Let me have him."

"Oh, all right," agreed the sergeant.
"I'll chance it, but I aint sure I shouldn't be lockin' you up f'r a *non compos mentis*."

Ernest, after seeing the tramp, felt that he was fortunate in getting so good a specimen, for he was the trampiest kind of a tramp. He was ragged and dirty and generally forbidding. Anyone meeting him on a lonely road would just naturally turn and go the other way. Of course Ernest did not care to be seen with him and so he concealed him in a hack, planning to take him to the river and there transfer him to a boat, meanwhile making explanations that he had not felt it wise to make in the presence of the sergeant.

"There's a couple of easy dollars in this for you, Bill," he said, having arbitrarily given the hobo that name. "All

you've got to do is to scare a little party of women."

"Wot's that!" exclaimed Bill, evidently startled.

"Why, there are some women in a cottage up the river a bit," explained Ernest, "and I want you to give them a scare."

"All by me lonely?" asked Bill.

"Of course."

"Take me back an' lock me up!" pleaded Bill.

"But they're really only girls—"

"Worse an' worse," asserted Bill.

"There don't nobody ever know wot a bunch o' scared skirts will do, fer they never do it twice alike, 'specially the girl ones."

"I'll be on hand to see that they're not too badly scared," Ernest assured him.

"You better be on hand to see that I aint too badly scared," rejoined Bill.
"You don't never know about women, I tell you. They may tear off a few yards o' scream that'll be heard in the next county, or they may stick you all up with hatpins. No sir, you take me back to my nice little cell! I might risk it with one—"

"Oh, all right," acquiesced Ernest.
"I'm only interested in one, and we'll wait until we get her alone—"

"—an' I aint none too keen about that," pursued Bill. "She might have a gun."

"Heavens!" exclaimed Ernest. "A gun! Why, Elsie wouldn't know what to do with a gun."

"Them's the worst kind," asserted Bill. "A woman wot shoots at you aint so bad, but a woman wot shuts her eyes an' blazes wild is dangerous."

"But I know Elsie—"

"W'en you think you do," remarked Bill sagely, "you don't."

"I know Elsie, I tell you," insisted Ernest. "She's little and timid. That's why I mean to be on hand. I don't want this scare business overdone, but I do want her to find that home is a good place to stay."

"Oh, that's the game!" returned Bill.

"This here Elsie is your wife, is she?"

"Yes."

"An' you'll be there?"

"Of course, but out of sight. You don't think I'd risk those girls with you, do you?"

"An' you don't think I'd risk meself with them girls, do you?" retorted Bill. "No sir, not any. But two bucks is two bucks, an' a little one alone don't listen so bad. Only I hope she don't scream; it rattles me."

ELSIE BRAND was sorely troubled, naturally. She was, as Ernest said, a dependent little woman, and never before had she had a serious disagreement with her husband. She told herself over and over again that she was right in taking the stand she did, but that gave her small consolation. A husband had no right to forbid—"positively forbid"—his wife to do anything, and any husband who so far forgot himself as to do that needed a lesson. She was giving Ernest that lesson, but there was no pleasure in it.

The girls she was chaperoning were having a glorious time, but she occasionally had difficulty in concealing the fact that she was nearer tears than

laughter. She wished Ernest would come and get her, first of course making abject apology for the brutal way he had spoken to her, and she rather expected that he would. If so, she wished to be where he could find her without loss of time, and for this reason she refused to join the rest of the party in an excursion to a farmhouse near by for butter and eggs. She would remain and tidy up the cottage, she said.

Of course she did not like being left alone there, but it was better than running the risk of missing Ernest, and she sought to crowd her fears out of her mind by busying herself with housework.

She was in the living-room, occupied for the moment with a feather duster, when the interruption came. She heard some one in the kitchen, and she instantly jumped to the conclusion that it was a tramp. It might be a cow or a pig or a goat or some other wild animal, but she felt that it was a tramp. And the reader will naturally have surmised that it was a tramp—the one upon whom Ernest had bestowed the name of Bill.

He appeared in the doorway between the kitchen and the living-room a moment later, and he grinned horribly when he saw Elsie.

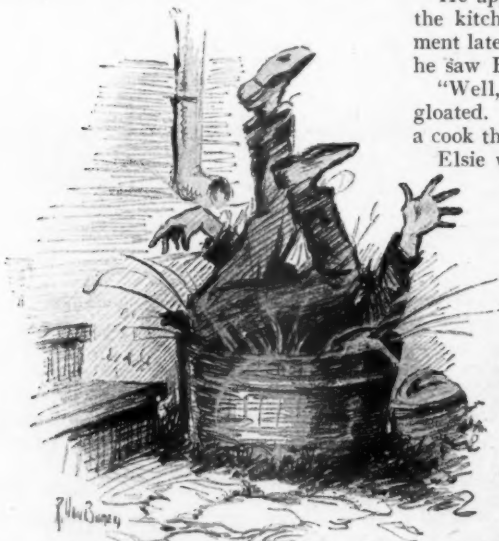
"Well, now, aint this luck?" he gloated. "Lookin' fer grub, an' I git a cook throwed in."

Elsie wanted to order him away, but she couldn't; she wanted to run, but she couldn't; she wanted to scream, but she couldn't. All she could do was to stare at him in terror; and Bill, as previously explained, was not a sight to rest the eyes.

"You an' me'll have a nice, cosy time, wont we?" pursued Bill.

Elsie thought of threatening to call her husband or the dog, as frightened housewives usually do, but her tongue for some reason refused to do her bidding.

"Git busy!" ordered Bill. "Hustle up the eats! We c'n do our visitin' later."



That was his great mistake, for just outside the door, under a rains-pout, stood a tub full of water. Elsie saw it, but Bill, having his back to it, did not. Unfortunate Bill

He stepped back from the doorway, so that she might enter the kitchen, but she made no move. She so far recovered her wits that she could think, however, and her thoughts were of a nature to rouse whatever of spirit and strength there was in her. She was alone with this dreadful man; she could expect help from no one; she must rely wholly upon herself. That gave her the courage of desperation.

"You look good to me," Bill commented appraisingly; "I wouldn't mind stealin' you, but we got to eat first—so drop them feathers an' go to it!"

That added to her terror, but it also called her attention to the one weapon that she possessed.

A FEATHER duster would not seem to be much of a weapon, but to have one's face unexpectedly dusted with it is decidedly disconcerting. Bill found himself chewing feathers, and he did not like the taste. She had entered the kitchen as if to do his bidding, but had pushed the feathers in his face instead. Naturally, he backed away; also, quite as naturally, he tried to grab the duster, but in this he did not succeed. It was jerked away, and the next moment his face was being dusted again. To escape, Bill retreated through the back door.

That was his great mistake, for just outside the door, under a rain-spout, stood a tub full of water. Elsie saw it, but Bill, having his back to it, did not. Unfortunate Bill! Elsie made one great lunge, this time at his stomach, and he promptly doubled up and sat down in the tub.

Then Elsie completely lost her head. Having this terrible man at a disadvantage, she frantically bombarded him with everything upon which she could lay her hands, and the first of these things was a kettle of boiling water.

Blistering, Bill screamed, but his cry touched no soft spot in Elsie's heart. She sent a jar of jam, a half-filled flour-scoop, a custard pudding, a pepper-box and a potato-masher after the kettle, and she was beginning to hurl crockery when Bill extricated himself from the tub and started for the boat.

There were stairs leading to the land-

ing below, but Bill had no time for stairs. He slipped, slid and rolled down the bank. Ernest, concealed by a screen of bushes, heard him coming, and was alarmed. He tried to intercept him at the landing, but Bill was in a hurry.

"Lemme loose!" cried Bill. "She may be comin'!"

"What did you do?" demanded Ernest.

"Wot did *she* do?" retorted Bill. "Lemme loose! I'm scalded!"

By way of emphasizing his desire to be unimpeded in his movements, Bill pushed Ernest off the landing, cast off the boat, jumped into it, and was some distance downstream by the time Ernest had clambered back on the landing.

A canoe offered opportunity for pursuit, but Ernest was thinking of his wife then rather than of Bill, and he raced up the stairs to the cottage. He did not disclose himself, however; there was no need. The other girls had returned, and Elsie, unharmed, was narrating her adventure with the tramp. It was not a gathering into which a bedraggled man with a guilty conscience would unnecessarily intrude.

"Anyhow," he reflected when he had returned to the landing, "I'll bet it brings them all home; but," he added disconsolately, "how am I to get back to town without advertising the fact that I'm water-logged?"

There seemed to be but one answer to that question: he "borrowed" the canoe.

THE desk-sergeant answered the telephone, and it was at once evident to him that there were a number of excited girls at the other end of the wire. One of them was reporting the facts to him, but he could hear many others prompting her.

"We're up at Bryson's summer cottage," she told him, "and there's been the most dreadful man here. He stole our canoe, and he tried to steal our chaperon."

"Tried to what?" exclaimed the sergeant.

"Steal our chaperon," repeated the girl; "but she was awfully brave, and she drove him away with a feather duster."

"With a what?" cried the sergeant.

"A feather duster," was the reply.

"I wonder," growled the sergeant, "if everybody's nutty to-day."

"We want you to arrest him," the girl went on. "You'll know him, because he's in our canoe—the *Alice*; and he was dusted into a tub of water, so he's all wet."

"Dusted into a tub," muttered the sergeant. "I don't blame him f'r stealin' a canoe to get away from that bunch."

"Elsie doused him, you know," added the girl.

"Oh, all right," returned the mystified sergeant; "we'll watch f'r a damp man in a canoe. Let it go at that. I'll be dippy myself if you say any more."

Of course, it naturally followed:

About an hour later the puzzled desk-sergeant was scowling at water-soaked and expostulating prisoner.

"This is an outrage—a diabolical outrage!" declared the prisoner. "You have no right—"

"What did you do with the tramp you borried?" interrupted the sergeant.

Ernest saw that mere indignation would get him nowhere, and he did not wish to be forced into a detailed explanation of his predicament; so he controlled his temper.

"He got away," he replied, "with a boat."

"An' you was gettin' away with a canoe?" suggested the sergeant.

"No, certainly not!" rejoined Ernest warmly. "I merely borrowed it."

"You're great on the borry, aint you?"

"I was going after some other clothes," explained Ernest.

"Then it's lucky f'r somebody that we got you first," said the sergeant.

"No, no, no," protested Ernest, "this is all a dreadful mistake. If you'll let me telephone my wife—"

"Is she borried too?" asked the sergeant.

"No!" thundered Ernest angrily.

"Well, don't get excited," advised the sergeant. "I got to be careful, an' any man that'll borry a tramp an' a canoe an' dive into a tub gettin' away from a feather duster—"

"What are you talking about?" demanded Ernest.

"I dunno," replied the sergeant; "it's too tangled f'r me. But where's the wife?"

"Up at the Bryson cottage, chaperoning a lot of girls," replied Ernest.

"Oho!" cried the sergeant. "The chaperoon, is it? Well, she's the one that said f'r to lock you up."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Ernest.

"They telephoned," pursued the sergeant, "that you was tryin' to steal her—but that aint reasonable, of course. It's all kind of scrambled, aint it? If she's your wife, you wouldn't be stealin' her, an' if you was tryin' to steal her, she aint your wife—so where does that bring us?" The sergeant shook his head dubiously. "Well, anyhow," he concluded, "she wants you locked up."

"But it's all a mistake, I tell you," insisted Ernest. "Let me call her up."

"I'll do it myself," decided the sergeant after a moment of reflection. "What's the name?"

"Brand—Mrs. Ernest Brand."

THE sergeant called up the Bryson cottage and was informed that Mrs. Brand was there.

"Didn't I tell you!" exclaimed Ernest jubilantly. "Just let me speak to her—" But the sergeant waved him away.

"Was you telephonin' about a wet man in a canoe?" asked the sergeant when Elsie came to the 'phone.

"Yes, yes," she replied eagerly. "Have you got him?"

"We have," answered the sergeant.

"Goody!" cried Elsie.

"He says," reported the sergeant, "that he's your husband."

"My husband—that brute!"

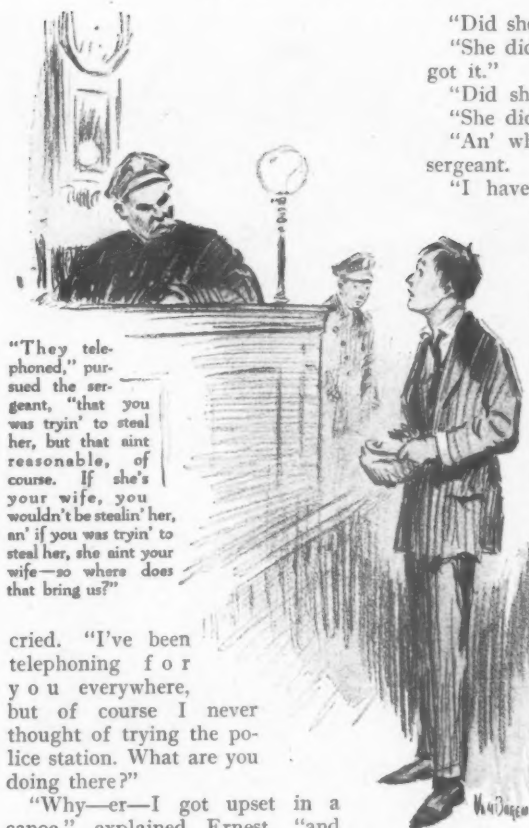
"She says," the sergeant reported to Ernest, "that you're a brute."

"Let me speak to her," pleaded Ernest.

"What good'll that do?" grumbled the sergeant. "What with borryin' tramps an' canoes an' stealin' chaperoons an' jumpin' into tubs an' claimin' wives, you got me where I don't dare believe nothin' at all; but—oh, well, go to it! You can't make it any worse."

Ernest quickly took the 'phone, and Elsie gave a little cry of delight when she recognized his voice.

"Oh, I'm so glad to find you!" she



"They telephoned," pursued the sergeant, "that you was tryin' to steal her, but that aint reasonable, of course. If she's your wife, you wouldn't be stealin' her, an' if you was tryin' to steal her, she aint your wife—so where does that bring us?"

cried. "I've been telephoning for you everywhere, but of course I never thought of trying the police station. What are you doing there?"

"Why—er—I got upset in a canoe," explained Ernest, "and the sergeant says you telephoned—"

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Elsie. "You're not the man, of course."

"Better tell him that," suggested Ernest, passing the receiver to the sergeant.

And Elsie told him. She was quite earnest and emphatic about it.

"You was denyin' him a bit ago," complained the sergeant. "First he aint an' then he is, an' how do I know where I'm at? I wonder if there can't anybody stay put to-day."

"He's my husband," insisted Elsie, "and you must let him go at once, for I want him to come right out here with two automobiles. We're going home, all of us; we've had enough."

Ernest smiled when this was repeated to him. "Fact is, sergeant," he explained, "she needed a lesson."

"Did she?" returned the sergeant.

"She did," asserted Ernest, "and she got it."

"Did she?" repeated the sergeant.

"She did."

"An' what did you get?" asked the sergeant.

"I haven't quite figured that out," confessed Ernest.

"Well, I got mine," said the sergeant.

"Your what?" questioned Ernest.

"I dunno," replied the sergeant, "but I got it."

BILL the blistered sat on the river-bank a little below the town, applying mud poultices to his burns.

"Beat out o' two bucks by a girl an' a duster!" he moaned. "Well, a man wot aint got any sense has it comin' to him, but never no more fer me! Lions, mebbe, an' Gatlin' guns, mebbe, an' tigers, mebbe, but never no women, not even baby ones. They aint safe nohow nor anywhere."

"It was awful!" confessed Elsie, again safe in her own home. "I was frightened almost to death, and I'll never be so foolish again."

Ernest smiled complacently.

"But it was all your fault, of course," she added.

"My fault!" he exclaimed, startled.

"My fault—why, I urged you not to go."

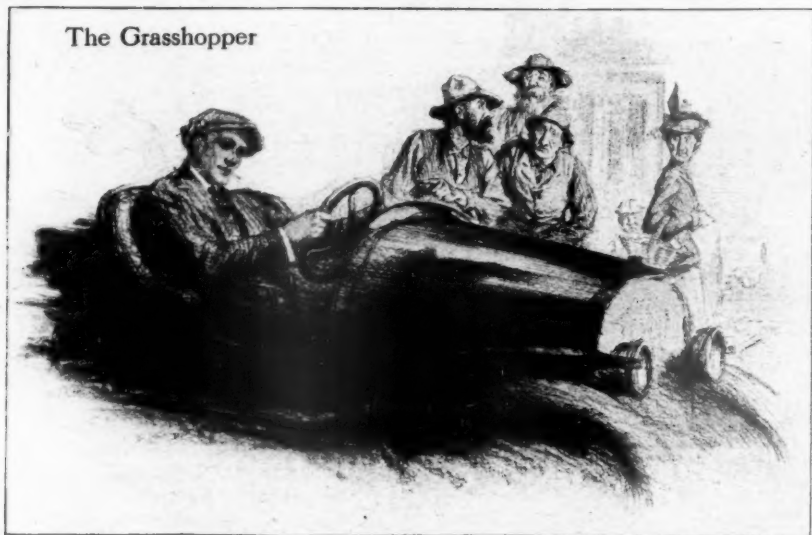
"No, you didn't," she retorted. "You didn't urge me at all; you—you commanded."

"Oh!" murmured Ernest.

"The girls wanted me," pursued Elsie, "but I had no intention of going until you positively forbade it."

"Oh!" murmured Ernest again; and a moment later, recalling the sergeant's question, he mused: "Now I know what I got."

The Grasshopper



The Modern Version

THE story of the Grasshopper and the Ant, with a new twist and a love interest.

By Alexander Hull

ILLUSTRATED BY HANSON BOOTH

THEY have been telling the tale of the Grasshopper and the Ant in one guise or another since the days of its author—was it *Æsop*? It's a good story. Its roots lie deep in one of the fundamental laws of life; it appeals to people's sense of fair play, to their fondness for seeing the under dog enjoy his day. It fulfills all the essentials of a good story-plot by its logical, satisfying, but unexpected ending. This is that story in its revised version, brought down to the days of the phonograph, the *aëroplane* and the cheap automobile.

Old Lucius Belford Whitman died rich, so rich that his name became a household word throughout the State.

He was a self-sufficient old gentleman with a morose and thoroughly acidulated disposition, and he professed, and probably cherished, a righteous contempt for all the Whitmans save his own immediate family. This feeling was due to the fact that they were either downright poor or in circumstances euphemistically described, for the most part, as "moderate." The poor relations, realizing that they had nothing to hope for, returned the millionaire Whitman's contempt—if not in kind, at least in quantity.

Upon the day when Lucius made his will, however, something (either a poorly devised notion of being insulting, or a fleeting streak of kindness) moved him

in a way that was reflected in the testamentary document. To each of some thirty agreeably disappointed relatives he willed fifteen hundred dollars—thereby making necessary, and possible, this story.

Robert Townsend Whitman plays in the rôle of *The Grasshopper*, Jesse Holland Whitman the part of the estimable *Ant*. One other character there is in the story, not to be found in the original casting of the plot—to wit, Miss Frona McAllister, a young woman of brains, beauty and sound judgment.

To be plain-spoken with you, Pleasantdale, where the actors live and the drama opens, wasn't much of a town. It numbered its inhabitants not by the thousand but by the hundred. The Limited didn't stop there, but three locals a day each way saved the place from utter stagnation by pouring in a trickling stream of strangers.

To be fair to *The Grasshopper*, when he came home from college he found the only fit opening for a young man in the town already filled by his cousin *The Ant*.

Jesse had early decided against the luxury of a higher education. Antlike, he was too busy to waste time or money on mere frills.

With no desire whatever to blind you to the faults of Robert Townsend Whitman, otherwise known as Bob, I ask in all seriousness, is a bachelor of arts, freshly graduated from one of our largest and most efficient universities, fitted (no doubt) for affairs of great emprise and matters of earnest import, to descend to menial trivialities like clerking in a grocer's shop or cutting chicken-wire and hose in a third-rate hardware establishment? And I reply—but let the young gentleman himself go on record:

"Well, old Jesse's got the only job in town. What can a fellow do?" he demanded whimsically. "Wait around, I guess, till Jesse gets promoted, or dies, or something, and gives me a chance at the bank."

"Why not go elsewhere?" ventured a friend.

Bob regarded his inquisitor sorrowfully. "And leave Frona to the machinations of Jesse, the plodder, the moss-

The Ant



gatherer, the future man of affairs, and by the same token the dulllest mortal in Pleasantdale?" he said gently. "May the Lord forgive you for asking it!"

"But you exaggerate about Jesse," said the other.

"I know it," said Bob. "I have to, to keep up my courage. Man, didn't you ever whistle in the dark?"

So saying, he went off to play three sets of tennis with Frona McAllister, while Jesse was balancing depositors' books inside the cage of the stuffy Pleasantdale National.

Do not sympathize prematurely with Jesse, however, because he did not feel the handicap of the job. The bread-and-butter business of life is a grim reality; a job is no handicap with a sensible girl like Frona McAllister.

PERHAPS it was natural that Frona should prefer Bob. As in tennis, so it was in everything else. Bob played for the love of the game, Jesse for exercise. It is scarcely necessary to add

that Bob played well, and Jesse very indifferently. Bob had all the grasshopper qualities. He danced well, he talked well, played well, told a rattling good story and gave promise of making love with shrewd and exquisite tact. He had all the social graces—but he didn't work. And Jesse did.

That loafing disposition of Bob's proved almost an immediate scandal to Pleasantdale, brought up in the good old-fashioned doctrine that a man should earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. The sweatier the brow, the more merit Pleasantdale was inclined to impute to his bread. Within six weeks of Bob's return from college the town had weighed him in the balances and found him wanting. It proceeded to make capital of his evident worthlessness as an argument against higher education. It rather favored a business course. Jesse had had one. It drew comparisons with a cheerful disregard for the odiousness of them. Frona was dismally aware of this.

"Bob," she said one day about three months after his return, "what are you going to do?"

They were sitting on a bench beneath the maples beside the tennis-court. He did not pretend to misunderstand her.

"Get a job in the bank, just as soon as they promote old Jesse—or fire him."

Her fine brow clouded. "That was funny enough the first time you said it," she answered, "but don't you think it's rather unworthy of you to go on repeating it? You can hardly mean it?"

"Not the firing part, anyway," he admitted. "Small danger of that. Jesse's too good a man in a bank. He knows what to do there, and he does it so well that in ten—fifteen—years, he'll own his own bank. Shouldn't be surprised if it would be this one."

She put her hand timidly upon his arm.

"Bob," she said, "why wont you be serious with me? I really want to know. It—it—makes some difference to me—what you do with yourself. I—"

There was something very boyish and appealing in his face as he turned to answer her, but his answer was the answer of the dreamer, the poet, the

troubadour, not the answer of—of Jesse, for instance.

"Frona," he said earnestly, "do you never dream dreams? I do! And they're wonderful—wonderful! There's fire and glory in them, and light and motion and color, and love—and you, dear!"

"No—no!" she cried. "Not me—not me! Bob, the dream without the substance makes for a bitter awakening. Leave me out of it!"

"No," he said, "I'll not do that! For my dream's but the forerunner of reality, and I'll not give up one jot of it. You and my dream—you and—" Suddenly he paused. "Frona, do you want me to be like Jesse?"

"No, Bob," she answered, "—except in the one thing. If you would show some responsibility, some thought for the morrow! But you wont, and I can't—I can't—"

"I know that," he said, twinkling with mischievous amusement; "but Frona, my dear, I haven't asked you!"

She laughed in spite of herself. "Robert Townsend Whitman," she said, "your bold brown eyes have asked me more times than I could number!" Abruptly she became serious again. "You haven't answered me yet."

He met her eyes sadly but fairly. "Frona, I don't know," he said. "But I can't go into the bank. I might have when I first came back, if Jesse hadn't got there before me, but I couldn't now. Shut myself all day in a cage with inert pieces of dull gold and silver, and crinkly slips of green, microby paper, and count my life away—when the outside world is so wide and so beautiful and so full of good things? Cage myself and clip my own wings? Die of dry rot in a country-town bank? At fifty dollars a month to begin on? And the prospect of being a second Dan Cardle at forty-five? Frona, I'd rather die!"

"When opportunity knocks for me,—and it will knock,—I don't intend to be in shackles and behind bars. I love you, Frona, too well to offer you a bank-clerk for a husband. It's not that I'm not willing to work, God knows, but I'm not willing to do that! I'll be frank with you. Cardle offered me a place—

said he'd make one for me. I asked him what he would pay me for my freedom, and he looked at me as if he thought I was crazy. I saw that already he regretted having offered me a chance to disturb his peace of mind. He told me fifty dollars. Fifty dollars!"

"But we could live," said Frona shyly.

"Live!" he echoed scornfully. "Yes, we could live—on your father. No, thank you, Miss McAllister—not I! It's bad enough to be living on my own!"

"Then you don't care," she began.

"Get thee behind me, girl!" he interrupted laughingly. "I am a mere man, and the temptation is overstrong. Let's play tennis!"

"Do you want me to take Jesse?" she flung at him.

He moved close and laid his hands on her shoulders. "Take Jesse?" he said, with his eyes steadily upon hers, "Jesse, with his hay-fever, his everlasting hair- tonic and his counting-house soul?"

She flushed. "You are horribly unfair to him!" she cried defiantly. "I believe I *will* marry him, after all—to spite you, if nothing more!"

He laughed. "Then you'll throw away a mighty good man for—"

"Oh—you *are* a conceited wretch!" she cried.

"Frona," he said largely, "I'm going to be rich sooner than Jesse is, I promise you! Wont you let me do it my own way?"

"You may do anything at all any way at all, as far as I am concerned," she said forlornly. "Shall we have another set before we go?"

"Sure," he said, ready at once. "Let me show you that back-hand stroke. It's a peach!"

AND then Lucius Belford Whitman, aforementioned, died and left *The Ant* and *The Grasshopper* each fifteen hundred dollars.

The manner in which the beneficiaries disposed of their legacies was characteristic. Jesse added his to his savings and bought the Stinson Block, which brought him in forty dollars a month in rentals. Pleasantdale, including Frona, approved.

Bob bought an automobile, for which he paid eleven hundred and fifty dollars.

Pleasantdale, including Frona, was literally aghast at his effrontery.

In the sight of Pleasantdale there was something almost immoral in owning a car. It implied great, ruthless, predatory wealth, or it savored of a sporting, dissolute character. There was one man alone in Pleasantdale who could have bought a car without arousing the instant suspicions of his neighbors. That man was reputed to be worth a hundred thousand dollars—fabulous wealth, in Pleasantdale. His name was Colonel Barry McAllister. He was Frona's father. He could have purchased a car, perhaps, without causing more than an uneasy feeling in Pleasantdale that a fool and his money were soon parted. But he didn't buy one. He didn't approve of them.

Imagine, therefore, the state of Pleasantdale's feelings when Bob Whitman came home from the State capital, driving his own car!

It took a month for the horror of the thing to wear off. It did wear off at last, of course, and came to be classed with Milt Haynes' chronic drunkenness and Jerry Bayle's occasional beating of his wife, as one of Pleasantdale's standing reproaches.

It is probable that Frona never definitely gave him up until he bought the car. At any rate, on the very same evening that Bob Whitman rolled into town in shiny black splendor, she told her friend Anna Parker that everything was over between them.

"Of course," said Frona, "I shall continue to treat him as a friend; but it will end there. One can't completely cut a person in a town so small as this. It's too embarrassing. Outwardly I shall treat him as usual."

FRONA McALLISTER adhered to the line of conduct she had mentioned, so closely that it is doubtful if Bob Whitman had the faintest surmise that everything was over between them.

For instance, at nine o'clock on the morning following his return, he drove up in front of the McAllister house, got out of the car and mounted the steps of the veranda just in time to hear Mrs. McAllister say:

"Frona, I forbid you to get in that contraption! He hasn't had it a day yet. I'm sure he can't drive it. There ought to be a law, I think, against letting people without experience drive those dangerous things. You just tell him that you positively refuse—"

"Hush, Mother," came Frona's voice. "He'll hear you."

The Grasshopper's conceit, however, was not so easily shattered.

"Don't you be afraid, Mrs. McAllister," he cried, immediately the door was open. "I 'chauffed' my way through four years of college, and—"

Mrs. McAllister, in her flurry, understood the word to be *loafed*. It fitted in well with her ideas of Bob Whitman.

"Well, if you did, I don't see what that has to do with driving a car," she said. "I think it is positively criminal for an inexperienced—"

"You're mighty right, Mrs. McAllister! A good car is entirely too valuable to be trusted with an amateur. But I think you misunderstood me. I've had four years' experience with cars. They like me. They walk right up and eat out of my hand. I can make 'em sit up and beg for their gasoline. Come on out and see it!"

"I'm sure I'm not interested," began Mrs. McAllister.

"Oh, nonsense, Mother," said Frona, laughing. "Come off the high horse and look at it, anyway. It won't bite."

They walked out to the car.

"Look at her!" said Bob rapturously. "Some car! Believe me, some car! She cost twenty-two-fifty, six months ago, new; and she hasn't done two thousand miles altogether. I've a frat brother in the business up at the capital. He got her for me at a forced sale for eleven-fifty. Weighs thirty-seven hundred—sixty horsepower. And say, the motor in her! Girl, she's a dream!"

On flowed the rhapsody undisturbed for ten minutes.

"Well, get your coats and bonnets, ladies," he concluded, "and we'll take a little spin before lunch. You can't tell anything about her by her looks. She's just like a girl; you've got to try her out to know what she can do. Tell you what: we'll run up to the capital. We

can do the round trip and be back by eleven-thirty. What do you say?"

"Fine!" said Frona.

"Frona McAllister," said her mother severely, "you are of age; and if you wish *deliberately* to commit suicide I have no way of preventing you, because, of course, you will pay no attention to my wishes. Mr. Whitman may value his life very slightly, and perhaps with entire justice," she inserted caustically, "but I should think you would feel differently about it. If anything should happen to you, your father would never forgive me for having let you go."

"Oh, Mother, don't!" exclaimed Frona. "It's perfectly safe, and I am going. But if you keep on harping that note, I'll not get one particle of pleasure out of it. Do be a dear!"

"Very well, please yourself," remarked her mother coldly. "And, Mr. Whitman," she added with dignity, "may I request that you remember Frona is the only daughter we have—"

"There's only one sun, and one moon, and— Great Scott, Mrs. McAllister, you couldn't expect to have *two* daughters like Frona!"

"I am not joking, Mr. Whitman. I hope you will be enough of a gentleman to drive slowly, as I am requesting."

"Slowly," said Bob blankly. "Oh—sure—and carefully too, Mrs. McAllister."

TEN minutes later, had there been a passenger in the back seat of the car, he would have heard the following conversation:

"I bet you we can make it in fifty-five minutes. It's forty miles—but the roads are pretty fair."

"Fifty-five minutes? I bet you a necktie to a pair of white gloves you can't do it, Bob!"

"Done!"

"Let her out!" said Frona.

And Bob got the tie.

Nothing happened to them, of course. Nothing ever happens to *The Grasshopper* until the time of the lean years has come to pass, and hunger has laid hold upon his person.

When Frona reached home, her mother asked her a number of very



He moved over to the divan beside her. "Frona," he asked, "how much of a salary would I have to be making before you would marry me?"

pointed questions, and was relieved to perceive, from her daughter's perfectly frank and sophisticated replies, that much as she might be inclined to admire Mr. Robert Townsend Whitman's social graces and attentions, *per se*, she had no intention whatever of bestowing her hand upon a young man who, at the age of twenty-six, was content to live at home with his family without contributing to that family's support, and to spend his last thousand dollars for a car, and his last hundred for gasoline.

Miss McAllister believed that that sort of a man made a poor husband. She openly admitted disappointment, but she gave no evidence of emotional weakness. When he was able, she said, to come to her with a job or a fortune, she might seriously consider him. Otherwise, distinctly not—and don't you worry, Mother! *The Grasshopper's* stock was not booming.

IT is November, and winter is imminent, although upon this fateful day there lingers a bitter-sweet taste of belated Indian summer over the valley and the town of Pleasantdale. The lean, cold days are lowering just over the eastern horizon. Does *The Grasshopper* have a foreboding of their imminence? If so, his jauntiness is well played. With many a quip and jest, he lounges gayly down the main street of the town to the Pleasantdale Hotel, where presently he will lunch upon the last coin his pocket holds, a shiny, worn fifty-cent-piece.

In the dining-room he spied his cousin Jesse, *The Ant*. "Hello, old Jesse," he said, making himself comfortable at his cousin's table.

"Hello, Bob," said Jesse. "Get on to those two guys in the corner, will you? I can't quite place 'em, but they look familiar. What do you make of 'em?"

Bob glanced over indifferently. Suddenly he started. "By all that's green and purple," he exclaimed, "it's 'Hap' Bronson and Mr. Charles Ridgeway Harrison, or I'm the forty-second cousin of a liar!"

Jesse grunted mysteriously. "You know what that means?"

Bob addressed himself thoughtfully to his soup for a moment. "Why, yes," he

said presently, "I believe I do. The two, railroad president and financier on the one hand, and demagogue and grafter on the other,—publicly sworn enemies,—having mutual interests to consider, and believing it unwise to commit the discussion of them to paper, and equally unwise to be seen together in the capital or its immediate vicinity, slip out of town to a forsaken country village, where their presence is unmarked, and their faces, supposedly, are unknown, and quietly fix matters to gouge the easy and complacent general public."

Jesse grunted again. "They got off the twelve o'clock local, and walked right up to the dining-room here. After dinner they'll fix it."

"Fix what, I wonder?" said Bob.

"We'll know soon enough, I guess," sniggered Jesse. "Somebody will, anyway."

He addressed himself to his dinner, finished it quickly and left the room. Within two or three minutes he was followed by Bronson and Harrison.

Bob Whitman finished his lunch without perceptible haste, rose and stepped out into the hall. There he appeared to meditate deeply for a moment. Suddenly his irresolution left him.

"Oh, well," he murmured philosophically, "even the best families countenance it at times; and who am I to sit in the seat of the scorner?"

With that enigmatic utterance he passed softly upstairs without meeting anyone. Before Room 15 he paused.

There was nothing sound-proof about the flimsy partitions in the Pleasantdale Hotel. Bronson appeared to forget that; but perhaps it was only that, believing himself unknown and unnoticed in the town, he did not consider it necessary to lower his insistent voice.

"That fixes us all O. K. on the bills and the gas matter, then," he said. "I'm glad to have it settled. Say, Harrison, they tell me there is some mighty good bass-fishing in the river here. I brought my tackle along. I'm going to take the afternoon off and try it. Want to go along?"

"No, thanks," said Harrison. "I'm no fisherman, you know. I've got to take

the two o'clock back to the capital, anyway. By the way, there's one other thing I haven't mentioned. The D. C. & L. is going to take the West Side franchise. I was thinking—the news won't be out for two weeks yet—that we'd better pick up that piece of bottom along the river, of Baxter's. Quietly, you know."

"Great Scott, yes!" exclaimed Bronson. "It'll be worth over half a million directly the news gets out. All it needs is a two-foot fill. What's he holding it for?"

"Fifty thousand, I believe."

There was a moment of rich and unctuous silence. Then Bronson said:

"We'll split fifty-fifty, I suppose, as usual?"

"Yes," said Harrison. "And I thought you'd better handle it. I suppose you'll use a dummy. I have a check here for twenty-five thousand, but I've left the name blank."

"All right," said Bronson. "Write in W. C. Haynes. I'll use him."

There was another moment of silence. Presumably the check was completed and changed hands.

"I'll see Baxter by noon to-morrow," remarked Bronson, "—that is, I'll have Haynes do it first thing in the morning. Sorry you won't go fishing, Harrison."

"Well—" began Harrison apologetically.

It suddenly occurred to Mr. Bob Whitman that it was high time he should remove himself beyond the imputation of eavesdropping. There was an alcove handy. He leaped abruptly behind the curtains, straight into the convulsive grasp of yet another eavesdropper. "Sh!" exclaimed both the guilty ones simultaneously, and fortunately, each obeyed the other while the door of Room 15 opened and the footsteps of Harrison and Bronson retreated down the hall and the stairs.

BEHIND the curtains then began the following conversation:

"Aint you ashamed of yourself?" inquired Mr. Bob Whitman.

"Hornin' in on those grafters?" inquired Mr. Jesse Whitman, with great contempt. "Nix—I'm not!"

"Interesting?" observed Bob, eying his cousin speculatively.

"Very," admitted Jesse dryly.

"And they'll clean up half a million," said Bob. "Makes one rather envious, doesn't it?"

Jesse snorted. "Not me," he said. "That's the trouble with a loafer like you—always thinking about things, but never jumping in and doing anything! I aint got any call to be envious. Fact is, I think I'll beat 'em to that property and buy it myself."

"Well, well," said Bob, with evident admiration. "Salted down fifty thousand before you're twenty-seven, have you? And in Pleasantdale, too. Jesse, my boy, I'm downright proud of you! You're a credit to the family. Even Lucius would have liked a young man that could earn fifty thousand so early in life."

Jesse didn't relish the sarcasm. "I aint got it yet," he said, "but I'll have a darned sight more pretty soon. I'm going out and interest Cardle and McAllister in it. I'll swing it—and I'll get the lion's share."

"As is only proper," said Bob. "The brains, the push, the energy—all are yours. You discovered the opportunity. You are entitled to it. Jesse, old man, how do you do it? You're a source of constant wonder to me."

"Just headwork," said Jesse, for even an ant is amenable to flattery. "Nothing to it you couldn't have thought of, if you'd used—"

"Thought of, yes," said Bob. "I did think of it. But put it over—that's a different matter. Do you suppose anybody in this town has any confidence in me—would lend me five dollars, even?"

"Nope," said Jesse candidly. "You're a loafer. They aint got any confidence in you."

"Alas, too true!" mourned *The Grasshopper*. "Where are you going now?"

"To the Stinson Block to collect my rent, first. Then the Bank."

"Guess I'll walk with you," said Bob.

He did so. When Jesse collected his rent Bob made a check for twenty-seven dollars and fifty-three cents, payable to his cousin.

"This is my balance," he said. "Would you mind cashing it?"

"Guess not," said Jesse. "You mean to say that's all you've got left of your fifteen hundred?"

"That and the car," admitted Bob. "I think I'll slip over and see if Frona doesn't want to run in to the capital this afternoon and see Ethel Barrymore to-night. I need something to cheer me up."

To this taunt Jesse, comforting himself with the reflection that Frona was much too sensible to tie up seriously with a penniless spendthrift who promised to be always penniless, returned no answer. Moreover, there was the additional comfort of knowing that twenty-seven-dollars and a half would last the spendthrift about two days at the most, and at the expiration of that time he would be compelled either to seek a job (which would preclude further loafing about the McAllister home) or he would have to sell his car. Upon the ground that a man would hardly throw away his one and only asset, Jesse shrewdly guessed he would not do the latter. But a gasolineless car—pooh!

However, Jesse had very little time to speculate upon such matters. By three o'clock he had been commissioned, not to buy the Baxter property outright, but to secure an option upon it, upon the basis of a sale price not to exceed fifty thousand dollars.

He took the six o'clock local to the capital, engaged a room at the Flanders Hotel, telephoned to Baxter and secured an appointment for the earliest hour possible in the morning. Baxter flatly refused to make an appointment for that evening, as Jesse wished, upon the argument that he was going to see Ethel Barrymore at the Grand, and had no business, so far as he knew, important enough to keep him away from a good play.

Jesse neither loved nor followed the theater. He knew of the said actress only in a perfunctory way. But everyone seemed to be going to see her, except the hotel-clerk, who declared that nothing except business would keep him away; so Jesse strolled down to the theater and bought a gallery seat, which

had just been turned in. By a piece of doubtful good fortune it chanced to be in the first row.

Two floors below he discerned Frona McAllister and Robert Townsend Whitman in "glad rags" in the orchestra circle. He was filled with the bitterness of gall and wormwood. During the brief time that the lights were on he watched them jealously, but with the grim satisfaction of knowing what they were doing. When the lights were off and the play was on, he could, try as he would, be only a prey to the ghastly fear that they were holding hands in the dark!

Naturally, he did not enjoy the play. It had cost him a dollar to be supremely miserable. The only sweet in his bitter was that to-morrow he would be worth, potentially, a fifth of a million, and his rival would be worth one second-hand car.

CAME morning, and promptly at eight o'clock Jesse called upon Mr. Jeremiah Baxter.

Mr. Baxter expressed himself as glad to see him, regretted to hear him say he had not cared for either the play or the actress and politely asked his business.

Jesse stated it, and concluded with several specious hints as to his interest in acquiring the property.

"Well, yes," admitted Mr. Baxter at length, "the property has been for sale for some time. But it didn't seem to move very fast, and just recently—yesterday, I may say, yesterday afternoon, in fact—it was brought to my attention by a gentleman that the property might be worth just a little more than the fifty thousand I was holding it at. And as the gentleman professed to have definite knowledge that it was, I signed up an agreement with him to leave the selling in his hands. But it's for sale. You might better see him about it."

Jesse was considerably dashed. "Well, I will," he said. "Just give me his name and address, will you, please?"

Mr. Baxter looked at Jesse's card, which all the while he had been absently fingering. He smiled and glanced up in his graceful, old-fashioned way.

"Well, now, I declare!" he exclaimed. "That's rather odd. The name and address seem to be, barring the trifle of initials, just the same as yours! Quite a coincidence!"

Jesse sternly repressed his desire to scream. Five minutes later he stood in the street in a somewhat dazed condition. He reached his hotel finally and secured his bag. It was not until he reached the depot and was boarding the Pleasantdale local that he sufficiently collected his wits to mutter bitterly:

"Hang it, why didn't I buy an automobile?"

When Jesse reached Pleasantdale, he consulted Mr. Baxter's agent and received the information that the sale price would be a minimum of six hundred thousand dollars. He inquired with sickly irony to what extent Mr. Baxter was being gouged by his agent.

"Thirty-three and a third per cent," said *The Grasshopper* blandly, "of everything I get over the fifty thousand he was holding it for is mine."

Jesse swallowed the hemlock. "How did you manage it?" he inquired meekly.

"Just a little headwork," returned his cousin. "Anybody could have done it. You could have done it. I figured out that under either your plan or Bronson's, Mr. Baxter stood to be badly fleeced. It was but one more step to the idea that a gentleman, warned of such a state of affairs impending, could scarcely fail to be grateful. I happened to be just in time to prevent his closing a deal with a man by the name of W. C. Haynes. By the way, you should have noticed that Bronson went in the direction of the telegraph station before he went fishing. Mr. Baxter is a gentleman of the old school."

"I told him I had reason to think I could increase his price and sell his property to better advantage. The actions of Mr. Haynes, which were exceedingly undignified, tended to strengthen Mr. Baxter's idea that I was trustworthy. When I asked him what it would be worth to him to double, triple, or more, his price, he was grateful, as I had suspected he would be. He made the price himself. It was very easy."

He paused thoughtfully.

"Of course," he offered, apparently as an afterthought, "I had the car."

"Yes," said Jesse humbly, "you had the car."

THREE days later the news of the D. C. & L. franchise on the West Side leaked out prematurely. Bob Whitman at once borrowed a hundred dollars from his father, filled the tank of his car with gasoline and hastened for the capital, where he took up his business quarters in the office of Mr. Jeremiah Baxter, with whom he became, in a few short hours, the very warmest of friends.

Ten days after his arrival in the city, the real estate entries in the daily papers contained an item to the effect that the Baxter Addition had changed hands at the large but not exorbitant figure, under the circumstances of the newly granted franchise, of six hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

Pleasantdale was as yet blissfully unaware that the young man who had served it through the summer as a mild scandal had executed a *coup* in high finance. There was a flavor of incognito about the state of affairs that could hardly prove anything but highly stimulating to a person of the grasshopper temperament.

Frona McAllister greeted the prodigal rather coldly. To be frank, she had discovered, during his absence, that she had become overfond of him. It worried her. She had accounted herself a markedly rational person, perfectly capable of saying to her heart, "Do this" or "Do that," with a reasonable certainty that it would be her very good servant and obey. Somewhat dismayed she had been to find it in rebellion.

She had come to the conclusion, therefore, that her only safety lay in seeing less of the amiable Robert Townsend Whitman, a gentleman not in a position to marry the girl of his choice, not likely to be in that position at any near future time, and apparently undisturbed by his economic unfitness. It argued, she was convinced, that he cared very little for her, if he cared too little to work for her. Under those circumstances it was rather humiliating and beneath her dignity to permit him further to monopolize

She inquired in a perfunctory manner if he had had a pleasant time in the city.

"Not more than half as pleasant as I expect to have now that I'm home again," said Bob.

Frona raised her eyebrows a bit. "There really isn't much here for one," she suggested tentatively.

"There's you," said Bob candidly.

She did not respond for a moment. When she looked at him finally, she was a little pale. "I don't believe," she began slowly, "that you are going to see very much of me. I've been thinking about it, and—"

"What's the matter, Frona?" he demanded, knowing very well the answer to his questions. "What have I done?"

"Nothing," she admitted. "Nothing at all—that's just the trouble. I don't like it."

"Frona," he said, "don't you care anything about me any more? Is that it?"

She hung her head a moment. When she lifted it, her eyes were sparkling with tears. "Bob," she said earnestly, "I do—I do! And that's just why I'm going to give you up. It will never come to anything. You won't work—and—and I've too much pride to ask Father to support us. And—oh, dear, it's no use—none at all! I may as well give you up now."

He moved over to the divan beside her. "Frona," he asked, "how much of a salary would I have to be making before you would marry me?"

"There's no use, Bob," she said sadly.

"You've been out of school now for six months, and you haven't done a stroke of work of any sort. And you haven't shown any intention of doing anything in the future—and you've deliberately evaded me every time I've asked you. And it hurts me and. . . . Oh, it's no use!"

"But just tell me," persisted Bob. "How much?"

"Oh, I don't know," she said. "I wouldn't have asked much; I'd have been willing for such a very little. I'd

have thought a thousand a year, here in Pleasantdale, more than plenty."

"That's five hundred in six months," said Bob. "Well, it does seem as if I ought to make that on an average, considering how well I've done this first six months."

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"I mean," he said, "that I have beaten the estimate that you consider necessary by one hundred and ninety-nine thousand and five hundred dollars. That's all."

"Bob," she cried, "have you gone crazy?"

"Crazy?" he laughed. "Crazy? Sure—why, I've been crazy about you for six months! Before I went off to college I liked you; but I wasn't more than a half-baked kid then—I hadn't the sense to appreciate you at your worth. When I got home in June, I knew in the flash of an eye that it was all up with me. I couldn't tear myself away from you. I knew I ought to—"

She took him by the shoulders and tried to shake him—a dismal failure. "I know all that," she cried in vexation. "I've known it as long as you have! Bob Whitman, come down to earth! Have you any money—and how did you make it?"

"I have any money?" said Bob. "Two hundred thousand dollars, to be precise. Made it in real estate. You remember the call I made the afternoon we went in to see Ethel Barrymore? I was cinching the deal then. I just finished up yesterday. I'm not crazy. Here's my bank-book."

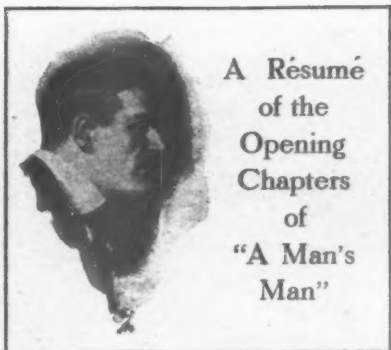
She stared at the figures incredulously.

"You're sure," she asked suspiciously, "that this isn't one of your—your bluffs?"

"I am. And now," inquired Robert Townsend Whitman, once known to Pleasantdale in the rôle of *The Grasshopper*, "may I converse with you, Miss McAllister, upon a matter of real importance?"

"Yes, Bob," she whispered, raising her eyes to his. "I'm listening!"

This fellow Hull is another "discovery." He has the real gift of the story-teller. Watch for another of his stories in the next Red Book.



A Résumé
of the
Opening
Chapters
of
"A Man's
Man"

THE love of "a real he-man, doing real he-things in a way that made him the he-est of the pack," and whose "serious attention could only be challenged by an extraordinary woman," is the basis of this new novel by Peter B. Kyne.

John Stuart Webster, mining engineer, bearded and dirty, flagged a train in Death Valley, California, and demanded admittance to a Pullman car. He had just come out, after a three-year stay in the desert, with one hundred thousand dollars to the good.

As Webster entered the passageway to the diner, he was just in time to hear a girl's voice tell a big, pink-jowled man that if he did not stop annoying her she would call on the conductor for protection. John Stuart Webster stepped forward and saw a girl "as beautiful as a royal flush." He offered his services. The girl turned, thanked him, and disappeared down the aisle. Then the mining engineer told the flirt to apologize or fight. The annoyer refused and swung a blow onto Webster's jaw. Two minutes later Webster had reduced the fellow to a battered hulk and thrown him into the vestibule just as the girl came through again.

Again she stopped and viewed Webster gravely, and then said, "You are—a very courtly gentleman."

Back in his drawing-room Webster was miserable. He had acquired a bad black eye that made it impossible to eat in the dining-car. He cursed his luck, for in the twenty years that he had been making fortunes and losing them, he had for the first time met a woman whom he

cared about meeting again, and found it impossible. The best he could do was to get her name, Dolores Ruey, and destination, New Orleans, from the conductor, who had her ticket—which also told that she would stop over in Denver.

At Salt Lake City, Webster made of himself a well-tailored man in a few days and went on to Denver to take a look at friends in his Engineers Club. He had decided to frivel for a year in civilization, then to go back into the mines and make more money. At his club Edward P. Jerome, president of a big Colorado mining company, tried in vain to get Webster to take charge of his mining property at twenty-five thousand a year. But Webster would have none of it. On receipt of a letter from his protégé, Billy Geary, in Sobrante, Central America, who had struck paying gold, he felt the old lure of activity, wired he'd finance the deal and come at once. Jerome went to his train with him; there again was Dolores Ruey.

WEBSTER spoke, but the girl did not recognize him. He boarded the same train, onto which she had preceded him. Jerome demanded an explanation of his friend's perturbation, and Webster told him, "That's the future Mrs. W. if I have my way."

Immediately the older man had a plan. If Webster married, he would not stay in Central America. So his marriage must be brought about. Jerome entered the Pullman and with sincere apology asked the girl her name. The girl smiled and told him "Henrietta Wilkins."

An hour later she received a telegram in which Jerome told her that the man who had tried to speak to her was John Stuart Webster, the man who had fought for her. It also explained Webster's plans and his own, and offered her five thousand dollars if she could induce Webster to come back and work for him within the next ninety days, whether she married him or not.

"I believe that amazing old gentleman is absolutely dependable," the girl decided amusedly to herself and wired, "Make it ten thousand." Jerome promptly accepted, and the girl fell asleep that night wondering how her unknown knight would manage an introduction, or whether she would have to.



A Man's Man

By Peter B. Kyne

Author of "Cappy Ricks," "Humanizing Mr. Winsby," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY DEAN CORNWELL

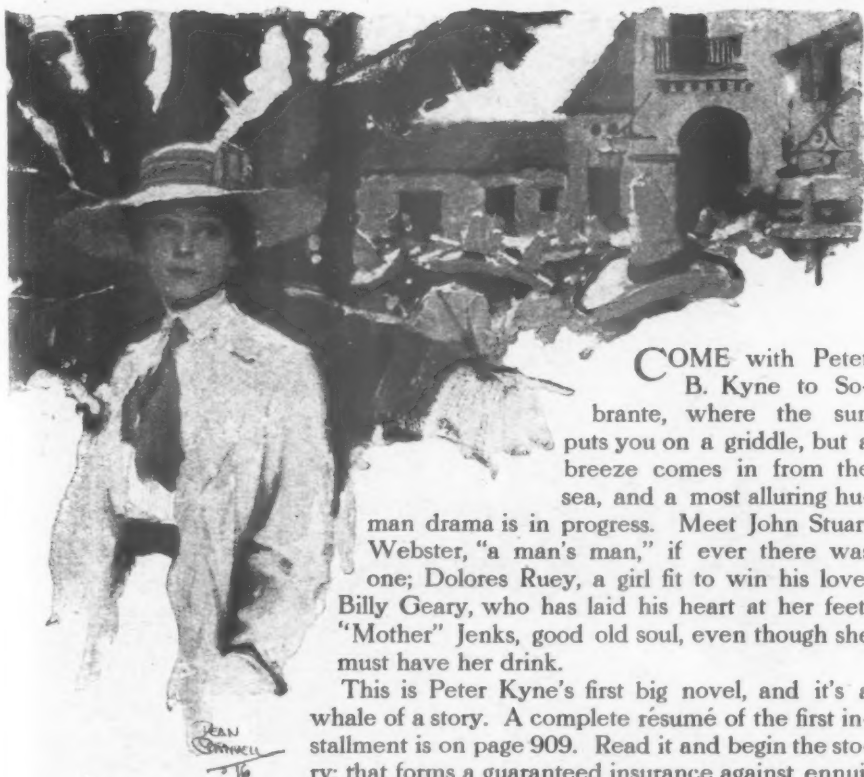
CHAPTER VI

DAY was dawning in Buenaventura, republic of Sobrante, as invariably it dawns in the tropics—without extended preliminary symptoms. The soft, silvery light of a full moon that had stayed out scandalously late had merged imperceptibly into gray; the gray was swiftly yielding place to a faint crimson that was spreading and deepening upward athwart the east.

In the Calle Nueva a gamecock, pride of an adoring family of Sobrante's lower class, crowed defiance to a neighboring bird. A dog barked. From the patch of vivid green at the head of the Calle San Rosario a troupe of howling monkeys raised a sun-up cheer that marked the finish of a night of royster-ing; from wattled hut and adobe *casa*, brunette women in red calico wrappers came forth, sleepy-eyed and disheveled; and presently from a thousand little adobe fireplaces in a thousand back yards, thin blue spirals of smoke mounted—incense to the household gods of Sobrante—Tortilla and Frijoles.

Brown men, black men, lemon-tinted men, and white men whose fingernails showed blue instead of white at the base, came to the doors of their respective habitations, leaned against them, lighted post-breakfast cigarettes and waited for somebody to start something.

To these indolent watchers of the dawn was vouchsafed presently the sight of Señora Concepcion Josefina Morelos on her way to early mass at the Catedral de la Vera Cruz. Men called to each other, when she passed, that Señora Morelos shortly would seek, in a Carmelite convent, surcease from the grief caused by the premature demise of her husband, General Pablo Morelos, at the hands of a firing-squad in the *cuartel* yard, as a warning to others of similar kidney to forbear and cease to tamper with the machinery of politics. And when Señora Morelos had passed, came Alberto Guzman with two smart mules hitched to a dilapidated street-car; came Don Juan Cafetéro, *peseta*-less, still slightly befuddled from his potations of the night before, and raising the echoes in the *calle* with a song singularly alien to his surroundings:



COME with Peter B. Kyne to Sobrante, where the sun puts you on a griddle, but a breeze comes in from the sea, and a most alluring human drama is in progress. Meet John Stuart Webster, "a man's man," if ever there was one; Dolores Ruey, a girl fit to win his love; Billy Geary, who has laid his heart at her feet; "Mother" Jenks, good old soul, even though she must have her drink.

This is Peter Kyne's first big novel, and it's a whale of a story. A complete résumé of the first installment is on page 909. Read it and begin the story; that forms a guaranteed insurance against ennui.

Green were the fields where my forefathers dwelt—
O, Erin, mavourneen, slan laght go braght!

At the theater we sit patiently waiting for the stage electrician to switch on the footlights and warn us that the drama is about to begin. Let us, in a broader sense, appropriate that cue to mark the beginning of the drama with which this story deals; instead of a stage, however, we have the republic of Sobrante; in lieu of footlights we have the sun popping up out of the Caribbean Sea.

Those actors whose acquaintance we have so briefly made thus far must be presumed to be supers crossing the stage and loitering thereon while the curtain is down. Now, therefore, let us drive them into the wings while the curtain rises on a tropical scene.

IN the *patio* of Mother Jenks' establishment in the Calle de Concordia, No. 19, the first shafts of morning light were filtering obliquely through the orange trees and creeping in under the deep, Gothic-arched veranda flanking the western side of the *patio*, to reveal a dusky maiden of more or less polyglot antecedents, asleep upon a bright, parti-colored blanket spread over a wicker couch.

Presently, through the silent reaches of the Calle de Concordia, the sound of a prodigious knocking and thumping echoed, as of some fretful individual seeking admission at the street door of El Buen Amigo, by which euphonious designation Mother Jenks' caravansary was known to the public of Buena-ventura. In the second story, front, a window slid back and a woman's voice, husky with that huskiness that speaks

so accusingly of cigarettes and alcohol, demanded:

"*Quien es? Who is it? Que quiere usted? Wot do yer want?*"

"Ye might dispinse wit' that paraquet conversation whin addressin' the likes av me," a voice replied. "'Tis me—Cafferty. I have a cablegram Leber give me to deliver—"

"Gawd's truth! Would yer wake the 'ole 'ouse with yer 'ammerin'?"

"All right. I'll not say another worrd!"

A minute passed; then the same husky voice, the owner of which had evidently descended from her sleeping chamber above, spoke in a steadily rising crescendo from a

room just off the veranda:

"'C a r-may-lee-ta-a-a!"

We can serve no useful purpose by endeavoring to conceal from the reader, even temporarily, the information that Carmelita was the sleeping naiad on the couch; also that she continued to sleep, for hers was that quality of slumber which is the heritage of dark blood and defies any commotion short of that incident to a three-alarm fire. Three times the husky voice addressed Carmelita with accumulated vehemence; but Carmelita slept on, and presently the husky voice ceased to cry aloud for her. Followed the sound of bare feet thudding across the floor.

Forth from the house came Mother



"To be the widow of such a gallant son of Mars," Billy declared, "is a greater honor than being the wife of a duke." For the sake of 'Enery's memory Mother Jenks squeezed out a tear.

Jenks, a red-faced, coarse-jowled, slightly bearded lady of undoubted years and indiscretion, in curl-papers and nightgown, barefoot and carrying a bucket. One scornful glance at the sleeping Carmelita, and Mother Jenks crossed to the fountain plashing in the center of the

patio, filled her bucket, stepped to the veranda and dashed three gallons of tepid water into Carmelita's face.

That awakened Carmelita—Mother Jenks' raucous "Git up, yer bloody wrench! Out, yer 'ussy, an' cook *almuerzo*. Gawd strike me pink, if I don't give yer the sack for this—an' sleepin' on my best new blenkit!" being in the nature of a totally unnecessary exordium.

Carmelita shrieked and fled, while Mother Jenks scuttled along in pursuit like a belligerent old duck, the while she heaped opprobrium upon Carmelita and all her tribe, the republic of Sobrante, its capital, its government officials and the cable-company. Finally she disappeared into El Buen Amigo with a hearty Cockney oath at her own lack of foresight in ever permitting her sainted 'Enery to set foot on a foreign shore.

Once inside, Mother Jenks proceeded down a tiled hallway to the *cantina* of her hostelry and opened the street door a few inches. Without the portal stood Don Juan Cafetéro, of whom a word or two before proceeding.

To begin, Don Juan Cafetéro was not his real name, but rather a free Spanish translation of the Gaelic, John Cafferty. As would be indicated by the song he was singing when first we made his acquaintance, coupled with the unstable condition of his legs, Mr. Cafferty was an exile of Erin with a horrible thirst. He had first arrived in Sobrante some five years before, as section-boss in the employ of the little foreign-owned narrow-gauge railway which ran up from Buenaventura on the Caribbean coast to San Miguel de Padua, up-country where the nitrate beds were located. Prior to his advent the railroad people had tried many breeds of section-boss without visible results, until a Chicago man, who had come to Sobrante to install an inter-communicating telephone system in the Government buildings, suggested to the superintendent of the road, who was a German, that the men made for bosses come from Erin's isle; wherefore Mr. Cafferty had been imported at a price of five dollars a day gold. Result—a marked improvement in the roadbed and consequently the

train-schedules, and the ultimate loss of the Cafferty soul.

Don Juan, with the perversity of the Celt, and contrary to precept and example, forbore to curse Sobrante. On the contrary, he liked Sobrante immediately upon arrival and so stated in public—this unusual state of affairs doubtless being due to the fact that his job furnished much of excitement and interest, for his driving tactics were not calculated to imbue in his dusky section-hands a love for the new section-boss; and from the day he took charge until he lost the job, the life of Don Juan Cafetéro had been equivalent in intrinsic value, to two squirts of swamp water—possibly one.

Something in the climate of Sobrante must have appealed to a touch of *laissez faire* in Don Juan's amiable nature, for in the course of time he had taken unto himself, without bell or book, after the fashion of the proletariat of Sobrante, the daughter of one Estebán Manuel Enrique José María Pasqual y Miramontes, an estimable peon who was singularly glad to have his daughter off his hands and no questions asked. Following the fashion of the country, however, Estebán had forthwith moved the remainder of his numerous progeny under the mantle of Don Juan Cafetéro's philanthropy, and resigned a position which for many years he had not enjoyed—to wit: salting and packing green hides at a local abattoir. This foolhardy economic move had so incensed Don Juan that in a fit of pique he spurned his father-in-law (we must call Estebán something and so why split hairs?) under the tails of his *camisa*, with such vigor as to sever forever the friendly relations hitherto existing between the families. Mrs. Cafferty (again we transgress, but what of it?) subsequently passed away in childbirth, and no sooner had she been decently buried than Don Juan took a week off to drown his sorrows.

In this condition he had encountered Estebán Manuel Enrique José María Pasqual y Miramontes and called him out of his name—for which there appears to be little excuse, in view of the many the latter possessed. In the altercation that ensued, Estebán, fully con-

vinced that he had received the nub end of the transaction from start to finish, cut Don Juan severely in the region of the umbilicus; Don Juan had thereupon slain Estebán with a forty-four-caliber revolver, and upon emerging from the railroad hospital a month later had been tried by a Sobrantean magistrate and fined the sum of twenty thousand dollars, legal tender of the Republic of Sobrante. Of course he had paid it off within six months from his wages as section-boss, but the memory of the injustice always rankled in him, and gradually he moved down the scale of society from section-boss to day laborer, day laborer to tropical tramp and tropical tramp to beach-comber, in which latter state he had now existed for several months. While waiting to round out the brief period of existence which drink and the devil had left him, this poor human fragment had become a protégé of Ignatz Leber, an Alsatian, manager for a German importing and exporting house, and agent for the cable company. By the grace of the philanthropic Ignatz, Don Juan slept under Leber's warehouse and ate in his kitchen.

To return to Mother Jenks.

CHAPTER VII

BEFORE Don Juan could even utter a matutinal greeting, Mother Jenks laid finger to lip and silenced him. "Go back to Leber's and return in an hour," she whispered. "I 'ave my reasons for wantin' that bloomin' cablegram delivered later."

Don Juan hadn't the least idea what Mother Jenks' reasons might be, but he presumed she was up to some chicanery, and so he winked his bloodshot eye very knowingly and nodded his acquiescence in the program; whereupon Mother Jenks started to close the door. Instantly Don Juan's foot was in the jamb; in a hoarse whisper he said:

"Whilst ye're askin' favors, woman dear, ye might have the kindness to ask me if I have a mouth."

"Bloomin' well I knows yer 'ave a mouth, for bloomin' well I smell yer blawsted breath," Mother Jenks retorted. However, the present was no time to

raise an issue with Don Juan, and so she slipped behind the bar of her *cantina*, poured five fingers of *aguardiente*, the local brand of disturbance, and handed it to Don Juan through the crack in the door.

"Here's all the hair off your head," Don Juan Cafetéro saluted her amiably. He tossed it off at a gulp, handed Mother Jenks the glass and departed with a whispered promise to return in an hour.

When he had gone, Mother Jenks went behind the bar and fortified herself with her morning's morning—which rite having been performed, her sleep-benumbed brain livened up immediately.

"Gord's truth!" the lady murmured. "An' me about to turn him adrift for the lawst fortnight! Well for 'im 'e allers hadmired the picture o' my sainted 'Enery, as was the spittin' image of his own fawther. 'Evings! 'Eil's bells! But that was a bit of a tight squeak! Just as I'm fully convinced 'e's beat it an' I'm left 'oldin' the sack, all along o' my kindness of 'eart, 'e gets the cablegram 'e's been lookin' for this two months past; an' 'e allers claimed as how any time 'e got a cablegram it'd be an answer to 'is letter, with money to foller! My word, but that was touch an' go! An' yet Willie's got such a tykin' w'y about him, I might have knowed 'e was a gentleman!"

Still congratulating herself upon her good fortune in intercepting Don Juan Cafetéro, Mother Jenks proceeded upstairs to her chamber, clothed herself and adjourned to the kitchen, where Carmelita was already engaged in the preparation of the morning meal. After giving orders for an extra special breakfast for two, Mother Jenks returned to her *cantina* and formally opened the same for the business of that day and night; while a lank Jamaica negro swept out the room and cleaned the cuspidors, she washed and polished her glassware and set her back-bar in order.

TO her here came presently, via the tiled hallway, the object of her solicitude, a young man on the sunny side of thirty. At the first glance one suspected this individual to be a member of the Caucasian race; at the second glance

one verified this suspicion. He was thin for one of his height and breadth of chest; in color his countenance resembled that of a sick Chinaman. His hair was thick and wavy but lusterless; his dark blue eyes carried a hint of jaundice; and a generous month, beneath an equally generous upper lip, gave ample ground for the suspicion that while Mr. William Geary's speech denoted him an American citizen, at least one of his maternal ancestors had been wooed and won by an Irishman. An old Panama hat, sad relic of a prosperous past, a pair of soiled buckskin pumps, a suit of unbleached linen equally befouled, and last but not least, the remnants of a smile that much hard luck could never quite obliterate, completed his attire—and to one a stranger in the tropics would appear to constitute a complete inventory of Mr. Geary's possessions. An experienced person, however, would have observed immediately that Mother Jenks' seedy guest had been bitten deeply and often by mosquitoes and was, in consequence, the proprietor of a low malarial fever, with its concomitant chills.

"*Dulce corazon mio*, I extend a greeting," he called at the entrance. "I trust you rested well last night, Mother Jenks, and that no evil dreams were born of your midnight repast of *frijoles refritos*, marmalade an' arf an' arf!"

"Chop yer spoofin', Willie," Mother Jenks simpered. "My heye! So I'm yer sweet'heart, eh? Yer wheedin' blighter, makin' love to a girl as is old enough to be yer mother!"

"A woman," Mr. Geary retorted sagely and not a whit abashed, "is at the apex of her feminine charms at thirty-seven."

He knew his landlady to be not a day under fifty, but such is the ease with which the Irish scatter their blarney, and such the vanity of the gentler sex (for despite Mother Jenks' assault upon Carmelita, we include the lady in that pleasing category), that neither Billy Geary nor Mother Jenks regarded this pretty speech in the light of an observation immaterial, inconsequential and not germane to the matter at issue. For Mother Jenks was the eternal feminine, and it warmed the cockles of her heart to be

told she was only thirty-seven, even though reason warned her that the compliment was not garnished with the sauce of sincerity. As for Billy, the sight of Mother Jenks swallowing this specious bait, together with hook, line and sinker, always amused him and for the nonce took his mind off his own troubles. Nevertheless there was a deeper reason for his blarney. This morning, watching the telltale tinge of pleasure underlying the alcohol-begotten hue of the good creature's face, he felt almost ashamed of his own heartlessness—almost, but not quite.

Let us take Billy's view of his own case and view his mendacity with a kindly and tolerant eye. For two months he had existed entirely because of the leniency of Mother Jenks in the matter of credit. He could not pay her cash, devoutly as he hoped to do some day, and he considered it of the most vital importance that in the interim he should somehow survive. Therefore in lieu of cash he paid her compliments, which she snapped up greedily.

In the cold gray dawn of the morning after, Mother Jenks always detected the bug in Billy's amber and vowed to rout him bag and baggage that very day; but when one is fond of blarney, it is hard indeed to destroy the source of it; and while Mother Jenks' courage had mounted to the point of action many a time, in the language of the sporting extra, Billy had always "beaten her to the punch;" for when instinct warned him that Mother Jenks was about to talk business, he could always rout her by declaring she was penciling her eyebrows or rouging her cheeks!

An inventive genius was Billy. He never employed the same defensive tactics two days in succession, and when personal flattery threatened to fail him, a large crayon reproduction of the late Henry Jenks, which hung over the back-bar, was a never failing source of inspiration.

This was the "sainted 'Enery"* previously referred to by Mother Jenks. He had been a sergeant in Her Britannic Majesty's Royal Horse Artillery, and upon retiring to the Reserve had harkened to a proposition to emigrate to So-



Mother Jenks' red face had gone white. "'Enrietta Wilkins was my maiden nyme, Willie," she confessed soberly, the message aloud; and when he had finished, to his amazement,

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Mother Jenks



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Mother Jenks laid her head on the table and began to weep.

brante and accept a commission as colonel of artillery with the Government forces then in the throes of a revolutionary attack. The rebels had triumphed, and as a result 'Enery had been sainted via the customary expeditious route; whereupon his wife had had recourse to her early profession of barmaid, and El Buen Amigo had resulted.

HOWEVER, let us return to our sheeps, as Mr. Geary would have expressed it. Seemingly the effect of Billy's compliment was instantly evident, for Mother Jenks set out two glasses and a bottle.

"I know yer a trifier, Willy Geary," she simpered, "but if I do s'y it as shouldn't, I was accounted as 'andsom a barmaid as you'd find in Bristol town. I've lost my good looks, what with grief an' worritin' since losin' my sainted 'Enery, but I was 'andsome oncet."

"I can well believe it, Mother—since you are handsome still! For my part," he continued confidentially, as with shaking hand he filled his brandy-glass, "—you'll excuse this drunkard's drink, Mother, but I need it; I had the shakes again last night,—for my part, I prefer the full-blown rose to the bud."

Mother Jenks fluttered like a débutante as she poured her drink. They touched glasses, calloused worldlings that they were.

"'Ow," said Mother Jenks, toasting the philandering wretch.

"How!" He tossed off his drink. It warmed and strengthened him, after his night of chills and fever, and brazenly he returned to the attack.

"Changing the subject from feminine grace and charm to manly strength and virtue, I've been marking lately the resolute poise of your martyred husband's head on his fine military shoulders. There was a man, if I may judge from his photograph, that would fight a wild-cat."

"Oh, m'ybe 'e wouldn't!" Mother Jenks hastened to declare. "You know, Willie, I was present w'en they shot 'im, a-waitin' to claim 'is body. 'E kisses me good-by, an' says 'e: 'Brace up, ol' girl. Remember your 'usband's been a sergeant in 'Er Majesty's Royal 'Orse

Artillery, an' don't let the bloody blighters see yer cry.' Then 'e walks out front, with 'is fine straight back to the wall, draws a circle on 'is blue tunic with white chalk an' says: 'Shoot at that, yer yellin'-bellied bounders, an' be damned to yer!'"

"To be the widow of such a gallant son of Mars," Billy declared, "is a greater honor than being the wife of a duke."

For the sake of 'Enery's memory Mother Jenks squeezed out a tear. Billy would have egged her on to a lachrymal flood, for he knew she would enjoy it, but at that moment entered Carmelita, to announce breakfast.

Mother Jenks, recalling her husband's last advice, declined to let even a So-brantean girl see her weep. She composed herself instantly, filled her glass again and pushed the bottle to Billy.

"'Ave another peg with Mother, Willie."

"I'll go you, Mother, although it's really my turn to set 'em up. I would if I had the price. However, I'm expecting action on that concession of mine pretty soon, Mother, and when I get straightened out, they'll date time in the Calle de Concordia from the spending toot I'll inaugurate. Ah, Mother," he added with a note of genuine gratitude and sincerity, "you've been awfully good to me. I don't know what I'd have done without you." He laid his hand on her fat arm. "Mother, one of these days I'll get mine, and when I do I'm going to stake you to a nice little pub back in Bristol."

She smiled at him with motherly tenderness and shook her head. In a concrete niche in the mortuary of the Catedral de la Vera Cruz the bones of her sainted 'Enery reposed, and when her hour came she would lie beside him. Moreover she was a tropical tramp. She had grown to like Sobrante, for all her railing against it, and she knew she would never see the chalk cliffs of Albion again.

"Yer a sweet boy, Willie," she told him, "an' I'd trust yer for double the score, s'help me. 'Eving knows I 'aven't much, but wot I 'ave I shares freely with them I likes. I 'ave a brace o' duck

heggs, 'am an' 'ot cakes, Willie, an' yer'll breakfuss with Mother. Duck heggs, 'am an' 'ot cakes, Willie. 'Ow's that? Eh, yer precious byby."

BILLY'S glistening eyes testified to the profundity of his feelings at the prospect of this Lucullan feast. It had been long since Mother Jenks' larder had yielded him anything more stable than brown beans, tortillas, fried onions and an occasional dab of marmalade, and the task of filling in the corners of his appetite with free tropical fruit had long since grown irksome.

Mother Jenks preceded him into the shady side of the veranda, where ordinarily she was wont to breakfast in solitary state. Her table was set for two this morning, however, but this extraordinary circumstance was lost sight of by the shameless Billy in the prospect of one more real meal before the chills and fever claimed their own. He flipped an adventurous cockroach off the table and fell to with fine appetite.

He was dallying with a special brew of coffee, with condensed milk in it, when the Jamaica negro entered from the *cantina* to announce Don Juan Cafetéro with a cablegram.

"A cablegram!" Mother Jenks cried. "Gord's truth! I'll wager the pub it's for you, Willie."

"I wonder! Can it be possible it's come at last," Billy cried incredulously.

"I'd not be surprised," Mother Jenks replied. "Bob,"—turning to the negro, and addressing him in her own private brand of Spanish,—“give Don Juan a drink, if 'e 'asn't helped 'imself while yer back is turned, an' bring the cablegram 'ere."

Within the minute Bob returned with a long yellow envelope, which he handed Mother Jenks. Without so much as a glance at the superscription, she handed it to Billy Geary, who tore it open and read:

Los Angeles, Calif., U. S. A.,
August 16, 1913.

Henrietta Wilkins,
Calle de Concordia, No. 19,
Buenaventura,
Sobrance, C. A.

Leaving to-day to visit you. Will cable from New Orleans exact date arrival.
DOLORES.

The shadow of deep disappointment settled over Billy's face as he read. Mother Jenks noted it instantly.

"Wot's 'e got to s'y, Willie?" she demanded.

"It isn't a he. It's a she," Billy replied. "Besides, the cablegram isn't for me at all. It's for one Henrietta Wilkins, Calle de Concordia, Number Nineteen, and who the devil Henrietta Wilkins may be is a mystery to me. Ever have any boarder by that name, Mother?"

Mother Jenks' red face had gone white. "'Enrietta Wilkins was my maiden nyme, Willie," she confessed soberly, "an' there's only one human as 'ud cable me or write me by that nyme. Gord, Willie, wot's 'appened?"

"I'll read it to you, Mother."

Billy read the message aloud; and when he had finished, to his amazement, Mother Jenks laid her head on the table and began to weep.

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN Billy Geary could reorganize himself, as it were, after the shock incident to his discovery that the cablegram was not for him after all, he turned his attention to Mother Jenks. Without quite realizing why he did so, Billy decided that fear and not grief was at the bottom of the good creature's distress, and in his awkward, masculine way he placed his arm around Mother Jenks' shoulders, shook her gently and bade her remember that chaos might come and go again, but he, the said William Geary, would remain her true and steadfast friend in any and all emergencies that might occur.

"Gor' bless yer heart, Willie," Mother Jenks sniffled. "If this was only something I could hentrust to a man! But it aint."

"Well, suppose you tell me what it is and let me be the judge," Billy suggested. "I haven't got one *centavo* to rub against the other, and on present form and past performances I'm the last man in the world to handle an affair between two women, but—I have a head on my shoulders, and nobody ever had reason to suspect that head of being

empty. Perhaps, if you care to give me your confidence, I may be of service to you, Mother."

"Willie," his landlady wailed, "I dunno wot in 'ell yer ever goin' to think o' me w'en I tell ye wot I've been up to this past fifteen year."

"Whatever you've been up to, Mother, it was a kind and charitable deed—of that much I am certain," Billy replied loftily and—to his own surprise—sincerely.

"As Gord is my judge, Willie, it started out that w'y," moaned Mother Jenks, and she squeezed Billy's hand, as if from that yellow, shaking member she would draw aid and comfort. "'Er nyme is Dolores Ruey."

"Any relation to the Ruey family of Buenaventura?"

"A first cousin, Willie. 'Er father was Don Ricardo Ruey, *presidente* av this blasted 'ell on earth w'en me an' my sainted 'Enery first come to Buenaventura. 'E was too good for the yellor-bellied beggars; 'e tried to do somethink for them an' run the government on the square, an' they couldn't hunderstand, all along o' 'avin' been kicked an' cuffed by a long line of bloody rotters. It was Don Ricardo as gives my sainted 'Enery 'is commission as colonel in the hartillery."

"That was all very well, you know, Willie, only Don Ricardo didn't go far enough. If 'e'd only 'arkened to 'Enery's advice an' imported a lot o' bloomin' Tommies to serve 'Enery's guns, 'im an' Enery never would 'ave faced that firin'-squad. Many's the time 'Enery's said to me: "'Enrietta, me 'art's broke tryin' to myke gunners out o' them black-amoores Don Ricardo gives me to serve the screw-guns. They've been born without a sense o' distance!' Gor' bless you, Willie, my sainted 'Enery 'ad no bloom-in' use for a range-finder. 'E'd cast 'is eye over the ground an' then try a shot for distance. Mybe 'e'd be a bit short. 'A bit more elevation, *amigos*,' says 'Enery, an' tries again. This time 'e's a bit over it, mybe, but the third or fourth shot 'e 'as the range an' stays right on the target. But then, Willie, as 'Enery used to s'y to me: "'Enrietta, how in blazes can I serve six guns? How

can a colonel of hartillery come down off 'is 'orse an do a gunner's work? It aint dignified.'"

Billy nodded. He had heard that story so often in the past that he knew it by heart; from all he could learn, the sainted 'Enery quite resembled a horse, in that he had room in his head for but one thought at a time. As a gunner-sergeant he was doubtless a loss to the British service, but as a colonel of So-brantean artillery he had tried to forget that once he had been a gunner-sergeant!

"You've 'eard me tell," Mother Jenks continued, "'ow the rebels got 'arf a dozen Hamerican gunners—deserters from the navy—an' blew 'Enery's battery to bits; 'ow the Government forces fell back upon Buenaventura, an' as 'ow, w'en the dorgs begun to wonder if they mightn't lose, they quit by the 'undreds an' went over to the rebel side, leavin' Don Ricardo an' 'Enery an' mybe fifty o' the gentry in the palace. In course they fought to a finish; 'ristocrats, all of them, they 'ad to die fightin' or facin' a firin'-squad."

Again Billy nodded. He had heard the tale before, including the recital of the sainted 'Enery's gallant dash from the blazing palace, in an effort to save Don Ricardo's only child, a girl of seven, and of his capture and subsequent execution.

"That ended the revolution," Mother Jenks concluded. "But 'ere's somethink I've never told a livin' soul. Shortly before 'Enery was hexecuted, 'e told me where 'e'd 'id the youngster—in a culvert out on the Malecon; so I 'ired a four-wheeler an' went out an' rescued the pore lamb. She'd been 'idin' there thirty-six hours an' was well-nigh dead, an' as there aint no tellin' what a mob o' these spiggoties'll do when they're excited, I 'id 'er until the harrival o' the next fruit-steamer, w'en I shipped 'er to New Orleans in care o' the stewardess. Hi 'ad 'er put in the Catholic convent there, for as 'Enery said: "'Enrietta, keep an eye on the little nipper, an' do yer damndest to see she's raised a lydy. 'Er father was a gentleman, an' you never want to forget 'e made you Mrs. Colonel Jenks.' So hi've made a lydy

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"Mr. William H. Geary," the girl replied softly, "I know now why your friend Mr. Webster sent that cablegram. I think you're a scout too." For reasons best known to himself Mr. Geary blushed furiously. "I—I'd better go and break the news to Mother," he suggested inanely. She held out her hand; and Billy, having been long enough in Sobrante to have acquired the habit, bent his malarial person over that hand and kissed it.

out o' her, Willie: education, pianner lessons, paintin', singin' an' deportmint. After she graduated from the convent, I 'ad her take a course in the University o' California—New Orleans wasn't 'ealthy for 'er, an' she needed a chynge o' climate—an' for the last two years she's been teachin' in the 'igh school in Los Angeles."

"And you haven't seen her in all these years?" Geary demanded.

"Not a look, Willie. She's been after me ever since she graduated from the convent to let her come 'ome an' wisit me, but Hi've told 'er to wyte—that I'd be comin' soon to wisit her. An' now, s'help me, she wont wait no longer; she's comin' to wisit me! Gor', Willie, she's on her w'y!"

"So this cablegram would indicate," Geary observed. "Nevertheless, Mother, I'm at a loss to know why you should feel so cut up over the impending visit."

There was real fear in Mother Jenks' tear-dimmed eyes. "I cawn't let 'er see me," she wailed. "I wasn't this w'y w'en my sainted 'Enery hentruisted the lamb to me; it wasn't until awfter they hexecuted 'Enery that I commenced to slip—an' now look at me. Look at me, Willie Geary; look at me, I s'y. Wot do yer see? Aw, don't tell me I'm young an' 'andsome, for I knows wot I am. I'm a frowsy, drunken, disreputable baggage, with no heducation or nothink. I've raised 'er a lydy on account of 'er bein' born a lydy an' her father bein' good to me an my 'Enery—an' all along, hever since she learned to write me a letter, I've been 'Enrietta Wilkins to 'er, an' Mother Jenks to every beach-combin' beggar in the Caribbean tropics. I've lied to 'er, Willie. I've wrote 'er as 'ow 'er fawther, before 'e died, give me enough money to heducate 'er like a lydy—"

Again Mother Jenks' grief overcame her. "An' wot lovin' letters my darlin' writes me," she sobbed. "Calls me 'er lovin' Aunt 'Enrietta, an' me—Gor', Willie, I aint respectable. She's comin' to see me—an' I cawn't let 'er. She mustn't know 'ow I got the money for 'er heducation—sellin' 'ell-fire to a pack of rotten dorgs an' consortin' with the scum of this stinkin' ole! Oh, Willie,

you've got to 'elp me. I cawn't 'ave 'er comin' to El Buen Amigo to see me, an' I cawn't ruin 'er reputation by callin' on 'er in public at the 'Otel Mateo. Oh, Gor', Willie, Mother's come a cropper."

WILLIE agreed with her. He patted the sinful gray head of his landlady and waited for her to regain her composure, the while he racked his agile brain for a feasible plan to fit the emergency. He realized it would be quite useless to argue Mother Jenks into the belief that she might pull herself together, so to speak, and run the risk of meeting with her ward; for the old woman had been born in the slums of London and raised a barmaid. She knew her place. She was not a lady and could never hope now to associate with one, even in a menial capacity, so there was an end to it! During the past fifteen years, the lower Mother Jenks had sunk in the social scale, even of free and easy old Buenaventura, the higher had she raised the one sweet note in her sordid life; not until the arrival of that cablegram did she realize that during those fifteen years she had been raising a barrier between her and the object of her stifled maternal yearnings—a barrier which, to her class-controlled mind, could never be swept away.

"She's been picturin' me in 'er mind all these years, Willie—picturin' a fraud," wailed Mother Jenks. "If she sees me now, wot a shock she'll get, pore sweetheart—an' 'er the spittin' image of a angel. And oh, Willie, while she don't remember wot I looked like, think o' the shock if she meets me! In 'er lawst letter she said as 'ow I was the only hanchor she had in life. Ho, yes. A sweet lookin' hanchor I am—an' Hi was 'opin' to die before she found hout. I've got a hanuerism in my 'eart, Willie, so the surgeon on the mail-boat tells me, an' w'en I go, I'll go like—that!" Mother Jenks snapped her cigarette-stained fingers. "I 'ad the doctor come ashore the last time *La Estrellita* was in, on account o' 'im bein' a Hamerican an' up to snuff. An' Hi've got 'ardenin' of the harteries, too. I'm fifty-seven, Willie, an' since my sainted 'Enery passed away, I 'aven't been no

bloomin' hangel." She wrung her hands. "Oh, w'y in 'ell couldn't them harteries 'ave busted in time to save my lamb the 'umiliatin' knowledge that she's be'oldin' to the likes o' me for wot she's got—an' 'ow I got it for 'er."

Billy Geary had a bright idea. "Well," he said, "why not die—temporarily—if you feel that way about it? You could come back from the grave after she's gone."

But Mother Jenks shook her head. "No," she declared. "While Dolores is self-supportin' now, still, if anythink 'appened an' she was to need 'elp, 'elp is somethin' no ghost can give. Think again, Willie. Gor', lad, w're's yer brains—an' you with your stummick filled to bustin' with a breakfast fit for a knight o' the bawth."

"Well," Billy countered thoughtfully, "apparently there's no way of heading her off before she takes the steamer at New Orleans, so we'll take it for granted she'll arrive here in due course. About the time she's due, suppose you run up to San Miguel de Padua for a couple of weeks and leave me to run El Buen Amigo in your absence. I'll play fair with you, Mother, so help me. I'll account for every *centavo*. I'll borrow some decent clothes from Leber the day the steamer gets in; then I'll go aboard and look over the passenger-list, and if she's aboard, I'll tell her you closed your house and started for California to visit her on the last north-bound steamer—that her cablegram arrived just after you had started; that the cable-company, knowing I am a friend of yours, showed me the message and that I took it upon myself to call and explain that as a result of your departure for the United States it will be useless for her to land—useless and dangerous, because cholera is raging in Buenaventura, although the port-authorities deny it—"

"Willie," Mother Jenks interrupted impressively, a ghost of her old debonair spirit shining through her tears, "yer don't owe me a bloomin' sixpence! Yer've syved the day, syved my reputation an' syved a lydy's peace o' mind. Kiss me, yer precious byby."

So Billy kissed her—gravely and with filial reverence, for he had long suspected

Mother Jenks of being a pearl cast before swine, and now he was certain of it.

"I'll send her back to the United States and promise to cable you to await her there," Billy continued. "Of course, we can't help it if you and the cablegram miss connections, and once the young lady is back in the United States, I dare say she'll have to stay there a couple of years before she can save the price of another sea-voyage. And in the meantime she may marry—"

"Or that haneurism or my bally harteries may 'ave turned the trick before that," Mother Jenks suggested candidly but joyously. "In course she'll be disappointed, but then disappointment never lays heavy on a young 'eart, Willie; an' bein' disappointed at not seein' a person you aint really acquainted with aint as bad as some disappointments."

"I guess I know," Billy Geary replied bitterly. "If that cablegram had only been for me! The only thing worth while I have done in my twenty-six years of life was to accumulate the best friend a man ever had—and lose him again because I was a fool and couldn't understand things without a blue-print! Mother, if my old partner could, by some miracle, manage to marry this Dolores girl, your arteries and your aneurisms might bust and be damned, but the girl would be safe."

"Mybe," Mother Jenks suggested hopefully, "yer might fix it up for her w'en I'm gone. From all haccounts 'e's no-end a gentleman."

"He's a he-man," Mr. Geary declared with conviction. He sighed. "John Stuart Webster, wherever you are, please write or cable," he murmured.

CHAPTER IX

THE ancient bromide to the effect that man proposes but God disposes was never better exemplified than in the case of John Stuart Webster, who, having formulated certain daring plans for the morrow and surrendered himself to grateful slumber in his stateroom aboard the Gulf States Limited, awoke on that momentous morn to a distinct apprehen-



Dolores flushed furiously. "I didn't think I could be mistaken," she answered a trifle coldly. "It is my misfortune nize you now. Somehow, Miss Ruey, I never have any luck." She was completely horrible," she told herself, "but at least he can lie like



that you were," Webster replied graciously. "Certainly, had we met at that time, I should not have failed to recognize you, and having the good sense to realize it, submitted gracefully. "He's perfectly a gentleman—and I always did like that kind of man."

sion that all was not as it should be with him. His mouth reminded him vaguely of a bird-and-animal store, and riot and insurrection had broken out in the geometric center of his internal economy.

"I believe I'm going to be too ill to eat breakfast," he told himself.

By seven o'clock this apprehension had crystallized into certainty. Webster had spent much of his life far from civilization, and as a result had found it necessary to acquire more than the layman's knowledge of rough-and-tumble surgery and the ordinary ills to which mortal is heir; consequently he was sufficient of a jack-leg doctor to suspect he was developing a splendid little case of ptomaine poisoning. He was aided in reaching this conclusion by memories of the dinner his friends had given him the night before, and at which he had partaken of a mallard duck, killed out of season and therefore greatly to be prized. He recalled the waiter's boast that the said duck had been hung for five days and had reached that state of ripeness and tenderness so greatly desired by those connoisseurs of food whose fool philosophy has been responsible for more deaths than most doctors.

"That brute of a duck was too far gone," Mr. Webster soliloquized bitterly. "And to think I'm killed off in the mere shank of my celebration, just because I got so rich and stuck-up I had to tie into some offal to show what a discerning judgment I had in food, not to mention my distinctive appetite. I ought to be knocked on the head with something, and I hope I may be if I ever accept any man's judgment in opposition to my own, on the subject of ripe mallards. This is what comes of breaking the game-laws."

He decided presently to go into executive session with the sleeping-car conductor, who wired ahead for a doctor to meet the train at the next station. And when the sawbones came and pawed Jack Webster over, he gravely announced that if the patient had the slightest ambition to vote at the next Presidential election, he should leave the train at St. Louis and enter a hospital forthwith. To this heart-breaking program Webster

entered not the slightest objection, for when a man is seriously ill, he is in much the same position as a politician—to wit: he is in the hands of his friends. A sick man is always very sick—or thinks he is, which amounts to the same thing; and as a rule he thinks of little else save how sick he is. John S. Webster was, in this respect, neither better nor worse than others of his sex, and in his great bodily and mental depression, his plans of the night before for getting acquainted with Dolores Ruey occurred to him now as something extremely futile and presumptuous. That young lady was now the subject least in his mind, for she was at most naught but a bright day-dream; whereas his friend Billy Geary was down in Sobrante with a rich wildcat mine waiting to be developed, while the source of development lay on a bed of pain, assailed by secret apprehensions that all was over!

"Poor Billy-boy!" the sufferer murmured. "He'll wait and wait, and his old Jack-partner wont come! Damn that duck!"

HE had one little stab of pain higher up, and around his heart, as they carried him off the train at St. Louis and stowed him in an ambulance, thoughtfully provided for by telegraph. In a nebulous way it occurred to him that Fate had again crossed her fingers when paradise loomed on the horizon; but recalling how very ill he was, he damned the duck. He told himself that even if he should survive (which wasn't possible), there could be no doubt in his mind, after all he had been through, that the good Lord had marked him for a loveless, friendless, childless man; that it was useless to struggle against the inevitable. He felt very, very sorry for himself as the orderlies tucked him into bed and a nurse thrust a thermometer under his tongue.

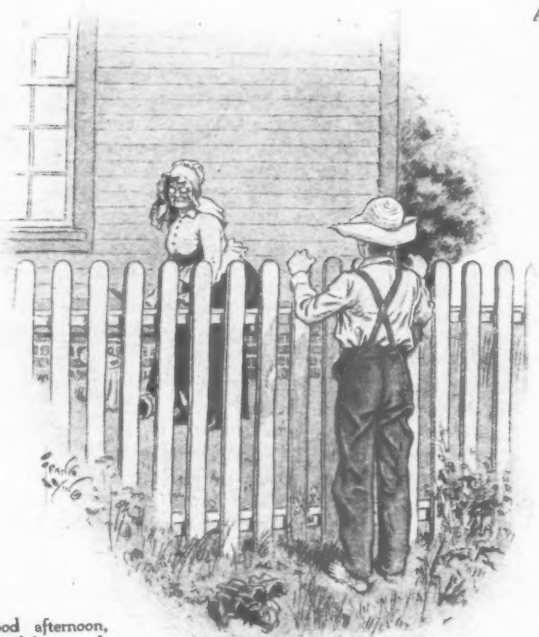
"A hundred and four and a quarter," he heard her murmur to the doctor a few minutes later.

"No bird ever flew so high that he didn't come down to roost," said Mr. Webster aloud.

The doctor and the nurse exchanged

Continued on page 1030 of this issue.

A story of real boyhood



By Frank
B. Wing

ILLUSTRATED
BY THE AUTHOR

"Good afternoon,
Mis' Moore. Is
Ben to home?"

Young Gentlemen

SAY, Ma, can't I go now? The carpet's all down and Josie says she'll put the chairs back."

Mrs. Bond, engaged in treating a bedstead with a prophylactic preparation of great virtue, suspended operations and slowly straightened her tired frame, pondering her decision. Presently she replied:

"Why, ye-e-s, I guess I can let you off now, George. Seems to me there *was* something else, though, that—"

Her son, well aware that so long as he remained at hand there was likely to be "something else," stayed not to learn its present nature, but glided unobserved to the door, swiftly fled the premises, crossed the street and entered the weedy alley adjoining the property of Mr. Benton Moore, the mayor, whose

grandson, Ben Hoffman, was George's boon companion. Mrs. Moore, a person of kind heart but somewhat austere manner, was in the yard setting out plants.

"Good aft'noon, Mis' Moore," said George, with deference. "Is Ben to home?"

The old lady was startled. She arose as spryly as her rheumatism would permit and turned upon the lad a glare that chilled him through. Then she said:

"Yes, Ben's to home. What do you want?"

"Wh-why, nothin', only us boys thought we'd—"

"Yah-h!" interposed the lady, brandishing her case knife. "Thought nothin'! Ben's got to work!"

She returned to her plants, and

George, her eye being off him, came out of a sort of hypnotic trance and walked away. At the rear of his father's barn he sat down on a log, his back to the building, and fell to considering what form of torture it would give him greatest satisfaction to administer to the acrid Mrs. Moore could he but have his way in the matter. He was still debating the question when his attention was suddenly distracted by a sound that issued from a crack in the wall behind him—a weird sound, like the wailing of the wind in a chimney. He threw himself prone amongst the weeds and began slowly crawling toward the door of the cow stable. When he had gone a couple of yards he rested on an elbow and listened intently, with hand behind ear and eyes wildly rolling. The noise was repeated with emphasis. George started visibly, then cried:

"My gosh! there it is ag'in! What can it be, this horrible sound that follows meh day and night? No sleep, no rest, but always that dretful wail that chills meh very b-blood! Ah! if I could only find meh way out of this accur-sed swamp!"

He resumed his toilsome journey to the stable, at its entrance delivering himself of another speech—then crawled within. Scarcely had he drawn his foot over the doorsill when an Indian in full war regalia leaped into view. With elaborate dignity this savage handed the paleface a wooden knife with which to defend himself; with manifest misgivings the paleface took it. Then ensued a tremendous struggle, though brief, the paleface being so weakened by his sleepless sojourn in the swamp. Steadily, relentlessly, the Indian forced him down, till with a despairing cry he dropped his bowie, when the savage promptly ran him through. He expired very handsomely, with much writhing and many groans and gurgles. The Indian, having made sure that his enemy was done for, struck an attitude, a foot on the enemy's chest, weapon and gaze on high. Tableau! The slain one now arose, and both went out and sat in the breeze.

The Indian was Ben. When they had pretty well recovered their breaths, George said:

"That there 'Octoroon's' a great old play, aint she?"

"You bet, and you do your part of that fight bully. We'll have a show one of these days, and me and you'll give that act. Say, come on over to the barn; I got somethin' to show you."

"Aint your grammaw there?"

"No; she's went over to Prescott's to borry some m'llasses. She'll git to gabbin' with old Mis' Prescott and do well if she gits home by supper time."

"All right, then, I'll go; but you bet your sweet life I don't want her to ketch me there. She was crosser'n thunder a-while ago when I was over to see if you was to home."

When the boys arrived at Moore's barn, Ben led the way to the carriage room, where he exhibited a cage made from an old-style piano box. The slatted side was uppermost; in each end was a small door swung on leather hinges, and in the center of the floor a tin plate, securely nailed. Ben offering no explanation of this curious contrivance, George queried:

"What's she for?"

"You couldn't guess in a hunderd years. That there business is a cat-fight box. You see, you take and starve your cat a couple of days, to make him fierce; then you match him ag'in' another feller's cat that aint been eatin' reg'lar either, and put 'em in through them doors. There's meat on that plate, and both of 'em wants it. So they fight, and the one that licks gits the stake."

"Oh, is that it? Sounds all right; but say, hadn't you better git your meat at the slaughter house? It's jest as good, and steak costs too much, 'less you can hook it off'n your folks."

"Well, course I'm goin' to use slaughter-house meat. Who said anything about steak?"

"W'y, you did. Didn't you say the one that licked would git it?"

"Aw, foolish! The stake's the purse—the money they fight for. Now, we want to get this thing to goin' right away. Every feller'll want to come in that's got a cat—or his sister has, which is the same thing—and we'll charge 'em twenty-five pins to enter. This here's Wednesday and I cal'late to give the"

show Sat'day; so ketch your cat, about to-morrow, say, and hide him away some'r's to train down."

George was of the opinion that he would have to be content with being a meré spectator, as his people possessed but the one cat, Joe, a pampered household pet and a craven fellow, withal; but Ben assured him that no one could successfully prejudice the fighting ability of a well-fed and untried cat. He said he thought it quite likely that Joe, if "trained down," would acquit himself very well. George retained his doubts, but he promised to do his best to put Joe in condition.

Their talk was interrupted by the brickyard whistle, blowing six o'clock. That was the call to chores and George took his departure. As he turned the corner he came face to face with Mrs. Moore, who smiled and said:

"Good evenin', Georgie. Nice evenin', aint it?"

"Blame take her," thought the boy, "why can't she always be that decent?"

THURSDAY evening George caught Joe, imprisoned him in a cage and placed him far back under the barn, there to fast. He had no little difficulty in keeping secret the cat's hiding place, for early next morning his sisters missed their pet and at once instituted search. They questioned George, who said:

"How should I know where your old cat is?"

He was taken in hand by his mother, whom it was harder to deceive, not from reasons of conscience or tender regard, but because of her powers of detection. To her George made answer:

"The last I seen of him was at the barn last night. Now, that's a fact!"

He said it with greater vehemence than was necessary, meanwhile staring wide-eyed at his questioner, in a manner that he thought must seem very open and honest. He had read that the way for a boy to show that he was a fine, manly, truthful little fellow was to look people directly in the eyes; so he gazed at his mother's so intently that presently she seemed to have four instead of two. He appeared guilty enough to have been the cat's murderer, but Mrs. Bond, being too busy to waste more time on him, merely told him to stop look-



She went so fast that George barely had time to grab her foot.

ing cross-eyed and to do what he could to help find the cat.

George thought that he had fooled his mother and discovered the way to do it again; wherefore was he happy. He went cheerfully with his sisters to hunt for Joe, but quarreled with Annie at the outset regarding the direction they should take. His statement that the last he had seen of Joe was at the barn, he now saw to have been unfortunate, for Annie was bent on beginning there. In vain George argued that the fact of the cat's having been at the barn on the evening before was no proof of his being there now. Annie said it was as good a place to begin as another, and that she meant to search it at once. George felt certain that about the first thing the girls would do would be to look under the barn and call Joe, and of course the cat would answer. The predicament was desperate. Something must be done, and quickly. Just then the calf, ever ready for a frolic, bounded out of the stable at high speed, and May, the elder and less strenuous sister, said:

"Hadrn't you better tie up the calf, George? He might kick us, or something."

Saved! But no, not yet. Annie said she wasn't afraid of any old calf, and she had her hand on the latch of the barnyard gate when George said, calmly, considering the issue at stake:

"Guess mebbe you'd better wait and let me tie him up, Sis. 'Taint likely he'd hurt you—but he butts awful hard, now he's gittin' so big. I wont be but a minute."

By the time this was said he had climbed the fence and was driving the calf toward the stable. The animal went in tractably enough and he had its halter on in a jiffy. He knew that Annie was not in the least afraid of the calf and he half feared she might tag after them into the stable; but he counted triumphantly on a phase of female human nature that he had already observed—namely: the inborn desire to be the object of the gallantries of men. Annie feared no calf, but she stayed on the house side of the gate until her brother's delicate service in her behalf was performed.

Having glanced through the window and seen both his sisters where he had left them, George seized the cloth that he used about once a month to polish the horse, tore off a narrow strip and dashed out the back way. Under the barn he went as fast as he could crawl. Joe seemed glad to see him, which showed good nature but bad judgment. George pulled a slat of the cage loose and grasped Joe firmly around the neck. Then he wound the strip of rag deftly around the cat's nose and tied the ends at the back of his head. A piece of brick served as a weight noiselessly to replace the slat, and George was out again. Hastily brushing from his clothes cobwebs and damp earth, he entered the barn. Annie was just coming in at the opposite door. Ever suspicious, this unreasonable girl said:

"George Bond, where have you been? I just believe tying that calf was a trick—so now!"

"Trick, your granny! I was jest out a-lookin' for Joe under the barn. You're the s'picionest girl I ever see!"

May, the pacific, now joined them and by a few well-chosen words averted the threatened quarrel. She led the way into the loft, which was thoroughly searched, with no better result than the finding of a nestful of eggs that were not marketable.

The girls now descended to the carriage room, calling as they went and frequently pausing to listen. They looked into the cow stable and cornercrib adjoining the barn, the oat bin and all the mangers. No Joseph. But one place remained—the right one. George said there was no use in anybody's looking under the barn, as he had done that; but Annie preferred to look for herself, and she did. At the first glance she exclaimed:

"There's a new box away back under there! How'd it get there, I wonder?"

George was ready with his answer.

"That old white hen was a-tryin' to set under there in the dirt and I put the box and some straw in it for her to make a nest."

That seemed to go pretty well. Annie called, "Come, Joe; come, Joe," then turned her head to listen. A sound as of

vigorous scratching reached the ears of all three children.

"What's that scratching noise?" demanded Annie.

This was the tightest place yet. Why had he not thought to tie Joe's feet! He must answer promptly—so he said the first thing that occurred to him:

"That's the hen a-makin' her nest."

"Now, that's a story, George Bond, and you know it!" rejoined his sister. "I'm going to see what's in that box!"

She went so fast that George had barely time to grasp a foot and stop her progress. His hands were well skinned by kicks before he could catch the other foot. By this time Annie was crying and demanding to be let go. May took her part and the jig appeared to be up; but just then there popped into George's head one of those saving thoughts that sometimes come in crises. With ill-disguised exultation he cried:

"Well, do you s'pose I want her to git amongst them toads? That place is full of 'em!"

That settled the matter. Annie backed out faster than she had gone in. Had George with equal probability mentioned bears, she might have proceeded, curious to see them and daring to risk harm; but toads were a different proposition. Annie said she thought likely the scratching noise was made by a gnawing rat, and started on a round of the neighborhood to inquire after Joe. Thus passed all danger of detection.

WHEN Mr. Bond opened the back door early Saturday morning he found thereunder a scrap of paper bearing this puzzling inscription:

a little milk now be careful not to mutch.

He asked George if he knew who had written this. The boy made answer that he did not, which was true, although he strongly suspected that Ben was the author, and that his meaning was "A little milk (for Joe) now. Be careful. Not too much." The family decided that the note must be the work of a certain shiftless and illiterate neighbor who claimed that society owed him a living, but who, finding society slow to concur, begged or

stole the living, so far as possible, from individuals. The words "not to mutch," Mrs. Bond regarded as a fling at her for stinginess, and she declared that the person should never receive another favor at her hands.

It was an easy matter for George, while procuring the milk from the original source of supply, to save out a little for Joe, who drank it so fast that he nearly choked; also, he munched a morsel of raw beef in such a business-like manner that George was encouraged to hope.

At two o'clock Mrs. Bond and the girls went uptown; at two o'clock and five minutes, George and Joe arrived in Moore's barn, where were already assembled a score or so of boys and half a dozen captive cats. Amongst these latter George promptly sought a seemingly fair adversary for Joe. All looked rather formidable, save one, a fat, sleepy old fellow, with whom it seemed likely that Joe might be able to hold his own. At any rate, this appeared to George the best bargain, and he forthwith hunted up the animal's proprietor, who proved to be "Buttermilk" Jackson, so entitled because he had repeatedly demonstrated, at the creamery, his ability to drink more of the by-product than any other boy in town. George proposed a match between Joe and the fat one. Buttermilk "hefted" Joe and examined his teeth and claws; then he said:

"Your cat don't seem to be nothin' very fierce, so we'll jest go you, for fifty pins a side and the winner gits the hull business."

This was satisfactory to George—or as nearly so as any other arrangement would have been—so they went to Ben, who had his office in the oat bin, and paid their fees. Ben gave them second place on the program and asked what time limit had been agreed upon.

"We haint thought about that," said Buttermilk. "What'll suit you, Bond?"

George had no idea, except that the time should be short—the shorter the better. After a period of low-browed silence, meant to convey the impression that he was considering deeply and weighing chances, he said:

"Two minutes."

"Aw, git out; that's too short untirely," objected Buttermilk. "We want four minutes, at least. Wild Bill's got to have time to git warmed up to do his best. Four minutes, or no fight!"

George, more than willing to withdraw, saw here a chance of escape and strongly reiterated, "Two," but Ben spoiled it all. He too saw a chance—the chance to bring into play his talent

for the diplomatic handling of a difficult question. Said he:

"Gents, in the 'pinion of the management there aint no way but one to settle this here matter right, and that there's to arb'trate, which means for each feller to give t'other'n a minute and call it three. Butter's cat can't fight so good before four minutes and Bond's can't fight so good after two. Make it



"What you been a-doin'?" demanded Mrs. Moore. "What's that box for?"

three; that'll be fair for everybody."

George could have thumped his friend for the suggestion, but there seemed no dignified way of backing out; so thus the matter was arranged. When the boys had paid their pins and "signed articles," Ben crawled out of the bin and announced the first number:

"Wild Bill Jackson ag'in' Joe Bond. The holders will take their places!"

The "holders," both in a violent tremble, squatted with their charges at the doors of the arena and awaited the signal. Joe was purring. To George the brief interval was one of intense suffering, for he was fond of Joe, and conscience smote harder than ever now that Joe's hour was at hand. He knew he was doing wrong, that it was wicked both to use the animals so and to speculate on the result; furthermore, he was deceiving his dear parents and sisters—and would undoubtedly get licked if found out.

At a word from Ben, the doors opened and the animals were pushed into the arena. Poor Joe saw the meat and made for it, but was beaten to the plate by Bill, who sniffed at the prize, then stood with lowered head, eyes wide and yellow, and tail in eccentric motion. He could hardly have been said to appear friendly. Joe's mien, on the other hand, was one of placation—as though he would have said: "Now, my friend, can't this matter be amicably adjusted?" The spectators were disappointed and one cried: "Aw, gosh, aint Bond's cat fierce? Reg'lar tagger!"

George heard the taunt and knew that it came from the detested Bishop, but he gave no heed; the situation in the arena was too tense. Nevertheless, he would not forget!

Gaining courage, Joe meowed his prettiest, took a dainty step forward and advanced his face as if to bestow the kiss of peace. Instantly the big cat struck, knocking poor Joe rolling. With a tremulous yowl the craven sprang into an upper corner and strove to issue between the bars. Vain endeavor! Bill had him down from there in a jiffy and had administered several good cuffs ere Joe could get away. George had now to witness the disgraceful spectacle

of Joe racing frantically around the arena with the enemy in hot pursuit. It was an awful sight. He could not endure to view it. Withdrawing from the crowd, he stood for a moment in an agony of indecision—then squirmed his way back to the box and opened a door. Instantly Joe shot out, dodged between the feet of the spectators and disappeared through an open window.

The crowd was greatly incensed by this inglorious dénouement, and it required all George's tact to mollify the boys. He might have failed but for Ben, who admitted the irregularity of George's conduct but said that as the time was almost up and Joe beaten, nobody had any real grievance. He then diverted the gathering's attention by calling another number.

The "holders" in this second set-to had taken their positions and Ben was about to give the signal when there sounded close at hand a cry that chilled every heart. It was the well-known voice of Mrs. Moore, calling Ben. The assemblage held its breath while the dreadful lady-pounded on the latched door and demanded admittance.

"All right, Grammaw; wait jest a minute," cried Ben. Then in a whisper: "Git, fellers!"

By the time he had unbolted the door all the boys had decamped by the back way, taking the menagerie with them.

"What you been a-doin'?" demanded Mrs. Moore. "What's that box for?"

"We was jest a-havin' a show, Grammaw. We had our lions and taggers—jest cats, you know—in the box. George Bond's cat was a-sheddin' awful. He shed all that fur jest while he was here. I don't b'lieve a cat's healthy that sheds like that, do you, Grammaw?"

BUTTERMILK, with the victorious Wild Bill, headed quite a procession of admiring youths as he marched homeward. George was in the throng but not of it. The boys derided him pitilessly and he yearned to fight, but the odds were too great.

As he left the others at Jackson's gate he took a last look at Wild Bill's face, unmarred by so much as a single scratch, and heard Buttermilk say that

he would match Bill against all comers, for any number of pins, but that no cowards with house cats need apply. Gall and wormwood! He, George Bond, would get even with that Jackson though it should take a year!

At table that evening, Annie said: "Joe's come back and I guess he's been in a fight." There was but little conversation on the subject and George did not endeavor to make more. Instead, he hurried through his supper without a word, save "Please 'scuse me," and went with unusual directness about his evening duties. When he took the milk pail from off the wash-bench, Joe ran out from beneath and disappeared under the porch.

"Huh!" ejaculated the boy. "That fool cat don't seem to have no grat'tude. I saved his skin for him, that's what I done. Wonder what Annie'd say if she knowed."

ALTHOUGH Saturday's show had proven something of a fiasco, as a show, interest had been great and receipts liberal; so Ben planned to repeat the thing, on a larger scale. He took George into equal partnership, with the title of assistant manager, and together they labored diligently at making a quantity of posters to advertise the event. George procured large sheets of wrapping paper and Ben a bottle of his grandmother's bluing, with which he made the letters and George the illustrations. On each sheet were placed appropriate wording (varied, as the work progressed, to accord with the fresh hatchings of Ben's prolific mind) and a picture of two cats, with remarkable teeth and claws, engaged in a spirited fight. The boys considered the posters a great success, and so they proved, measuring success by results, for on the following Saturday afternoon Moore's barn was so crowded with boys who had paid ten pins to see the show that the management was compelled to move the box out into the hog lot behind the barn.

Buttermilk was there with Wild Bill, concerning whose prowess he was doing no end of boasting. It was effective talk, too, for when presently Ben said it was time to begin the program and asked

all boys who had animals to match to step up lively, nobody stepped. All interest centered in Wild Bill, this much-vaunted champion whose only known achievement consisted in the vanquishing of a small and recreant animal, the inexperienced pet of an indulgent household. Thus are reputations often built, by clamorous advertising based upon no foundation of merit. So well had Buttermilk, modern "publicity man" in embryo, done his work that nothing less than a battle in which the wild one was engaged would interest the crowd; yet so great was the animal's name that none of the proprietors present would match against him. In vain Ben pleaded.

George had never heard of the psychological moment, but he knew one when he saw it. With bearing confident in the extreme he approached Buttermilk and hurled defiance in his very teeth, saying:

"Buttermilk, last Sat'day you called me a coward and right then I swore to git even. To-day I'm here to do it. If you aint a coward yourself, git your cat ready for the doggonedest fight *he* was ever in. But unless he's a real fighter, better not put him into that box with the cat I've got, 'cause you'll wisht you hadn't, I'm telling you!"

Loud applause followed this brave speech. When comparative quiet had returned, Buttermilk, who was no orator, simply said:

"Wild Bill aint scared of no cat 'at ever chawed meat! Git your cat!"

George went into the barn and promptly returned with the cage that had borne Joe to his disgrace; but how different from him was its present occupant! The veriest scarecrow of a cat, lank and rusty, with a two-inch stump of tail, one ear, flat, scarified nose, and bleary eyes, moved restlessly about within the narrow confines of the cage, like a regular circus tiger. George warned the boys not to put their faces too close to the bars, as the animal was dangerous. As if to prove the warning's truth, the cat gave an overcurious youth two slight scratches on the end of his nose. Had the boy then been destroyed, the excitement could scarcely have been greater.

Ben now leaped upon a stump and announced the particulars of the match, surpassing even his brilliant self in oratory. Boiled down, his plentiful sap of verbiage yielded only valueless statements to the effect that the well-known champion, Wild Bill Jackson, had at last found a worthy foe in the person of one Vein-sucker Bond and that the battle would be fought for two hundred pins and to the bitter end.

All the preliminaries having been observed, the animals were put into the box; they promptly clashed most ardently.

To boys who happened to be near the box, the fight was a very satisfactory spectacle, but with those at a distance the case was different. They could see nothing—so they began trying to force their way to better places. Those in good positions quite naturally endeavored to retain them, and in about ten seconds from the beginning of the trouble within the arena there was some without, the racket of which was to the other as a hundred to one. Boys pulled hair and scratched; they thumped and kicked and butted, altogether indiscriminately. Whoever connected with an injury was the one for whom it was intended. Pandemonium! Chaos!

People of that neighborhood were accustomed to a sufficiency of boy-made noise but the volume of to-day's was entirely without precedent. All the housewives were out and wondering, and Deacon Prescott, whose garden was just

across the alley from the battle-field, pounded on his fence with a hoe and demanded quiet till he was well-nigh breathless.

In a doorway of the barn, provokingly halted by the deep mud of the hog-lot, stood Mrs. Moore, rolling pin in hand and fire in eye, screaming at the top of her voice, "You, Ben Hoffman! Come here this minute, you young rascal-lion, you!"—and more to the same effect, or rather, to none at all. She might as well have tried to overcome the noise of a rolling mill.

But Mrs.



The boys considered the posters a great success.

Moore was a woman of action. Finding her vocal efforts unavailing, she quickly bridged the mud with a board, and before the boys awoke to her presence she was in their midst and laying about her with the rolling pin.

The town marshal could have quelled the riot in time, perhaps, but a company of soldiers could hardly have accomplished its suppression so promptly as did this dreaded woman. In one minute from her advent on the field, she had routed the rioters, released the cats and chased them off her premises, and was explaining to the good deacon "the red-c'ulous goin's on of them boys."

THE boys dispersed by Mrs. Moore let no grass grow under their feet while getting out of the alley and away from the territory of her jurisdiction. Safely arrived in the street, they halted to discuss the situation in general, and in particular the question of how the fight in the box would have terminated had it not been interrupted. They quickly separated into two groups of opinion, one headed by George and the other by Buttermilk.

While the question was being argued, it was pretty conclusively settled by the cats themselves, who dashed out of the alley and away toward Buttermilk's home. Wild Bill was in the lead and there was that about his appearance that somehow indicated that he was making it the business of his life to maintain his distance. Just within Jackson's yard the enemy caught Wild Bill and rolled him over, but this hindrance lost Bill only a stride, and a second later he had gained the kitchen, and was safe. Buttermilk, weeping with chagrin, rushed into the house and slammed the door; so nothing now remained for the others but to jeer awhile, then go their ways.

When George reached home, he had, as ineradicable evidences of the late unpleasantness, a swollen nose and several scratches, besides some rents in his clothing. His mother gave him a scathing lecture for fighting and he thought that ended the matter. Ill-advised belief! While he was doing the milking, Mrs. Moore called on Mrs. Bond and im-

parted the story of the business of the two Saturday afternoons and the part that George had taken in it. When he came in from the barn he received a royal spanking and was sent to bed supperless.

The mayor let Ben off, that evening, with a severe reprimand and imprisonment in the cellar until nine o'clock; but next day the boy was compelled to break the beautiful box, in his eyes so valuable for various purposes, into kindling wood. Buttermilk also escaped physical chastisement, but went to bed supperless, a punishment next in severity to decapitation. His troubles growing out of the affair at Moore's did not end with the home punishment, however. The boys made his life miserable for a week.

SEVERE corporal punishment, together with sundry other manifestations of his family's displeasure, placed George Bond under deep conviction of sin which lasted until his family's attitude of coldness relented. This era of eclipse seemed long to George, yet by next Sunday week he had so far emerged as to be capable of this note to Ben, in Sunday school.

Say Ben, I know wher you can get another pianer box.

By way of reply Ben very successfully counterfeited the actions of a belligerent cat—whereupon that session went completely to pot. The boys were convulsed with merriment. In vain did Brother Humphrey, the teacher, who occupied the unenviable position of the uninitiated, rap loudly on his hymn-book and demand silence. The titterings continued despite the boys' best efforts at repression; and when, after repeating the question, "Then what did Moses do?" he gathered, from Buttermilk, this only reply, "Got swallowed by a whale," Brother Humphrey waited but for subsidence of the ensuing riot before dismissing the class, fully five minutes ahead of the regular time, with this great truth ringing in its ears:

"Young Christian gentlemen should not behave as heathen!"

Another boyhood story by Frank Wing in the next issue.

The Warmth of Life

THE story of the little school
teacher from Elfrida, Michigan.

By Berthe Knatvold Mellett

Author of "His Woman," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN NEWTON HOWITT

THE doctor told her to drink beer; and her singing master told her to fall in love with a married man. Each, from his own viewpoint, saw a framework, marvelous for all its barrenness, to be filled out.

She had no idea of going to a doctor when she went to New York. Her one thought was to reach Hugo Masser and begin the instruction to attain which she had skimped and drudged through the long years since her ambition first awoke at sound of her own voice. With the dust of travel still in the gathers of her green plaid blouse, she sought the famous master even before she presented her letter to Mrs. Williams, who took boarders into her flat on Seventy-sixth Street.

Masser looked her over, asked questions, made a lesson appointment for the next day and gave her the address of a doctor.

When she came for her lesson she still wore the plaid blouse. Masser dismissed the accompanist, settled himself in the armchair across the studio from the piano and told her to sing. She struck the keys and opened her mouth, and her voice hit high and hard against the walls of the room. Masser winced and narrowed his eyes in thought.

"Where did you get that waist you're wearing!" he broke out finally. She paused grimly censorious.

"At home."

"Where's home?"

"Elfrida, Michigan."

"Elfrida—Elfrida, Michigan." The

master nodded as though it explained a lot. She sang on until he rapped the arm of his chair again.

"How did you happen to come to me?" he called across the room.

"I worked. Things don't happen with me—I work for them." She wheeled back to the keyboard, and Masser nodded again.

"Worked?" he interrupted once more.

"How?"

"Taught school."

"Ah! Then you love children."

"Hardly."

"And big children—men?"

She whanged an angry chord.

"See here," she snapped, "it took me years—bitter, long years—to get the money to come to you—for lessons, not talk!"

"All right," he agreed. "But lessons are not all *do re mi fa*. We must begin at the beginning. It is Masser's way—and it gets his students the big engagements—opera, concert, church. So, you take lessons Masser's way, or you go to another teacher. You don't want to do that? Very well, then. We begin with our lesson. Now tell me—you have loved?"

She looked at him, vaguely enlightened, but still deeply disapproving. He waited for her answer, and she shook her head.

"Why?" His question was kind and compelling.

"I couldn't—let myself. I had my voice to live for. It took all my time and thought, getting the money to come here."



"Ah!" Masser's head was going like a mandarin's. "You were busy—and had your voice—yes! But the men—"

"Men!" she snorted. "Do you think I'd bother with men whose one idea is to buy an ugly little house on the installment plan?"

"So!" The master's brows climbed to his forehead. "Some one would buy for you a house on the installment plan?"

"What has that got to do with my lesson?"

"What kind of man?"

"Usual kind. Works in the office at the rolling-mills. Putters with some invention to catch gases from hot metals and make acids of them."

"Too bad—too bad!"

"What?"

"Too bad, when the warmth goes from the heart."

"Hearts don't stay warm long, school-teaching."

She began to sing, and Masser sat quiet, moving his lips in council with himself until the half-hour was gone.

"You went to the doctor?" he called, rapping his chair-arm.

"Yes."

"Good! And he said?"

"To drink beer."

"Ah! Beer is good. You got it?"

"No."

"No! Why?"



"Stop!" Masser shrieked. "In that song is memory—the ache of an old pain—a long, long cry! But you sing it like—*ach!* Send me the gas-saver. Of him I can make a singer. But not of you—not of you!"

"I can't drink beer."

"Can't drink beer? *Mein Gott.* Everybody can drink beer. Why?"

"I never have."

"Ah-h-h! You never have drunk beer! Things do not happen with you—you work for them! You do not love children! You have no time for men who would buy ugly little houses on the installment plan! *Gott!* The starved years! And you come to me to learn to sing! Can I put song into the years that are gone? Can I put passion and pain and joy into the dried-up heart? Here, sing this!"

He plumped out of his chair and clattered across the floor to a pile of music.

Clawing through it, scattering sheets here and fragments there, he found what he sought and set it before her. Her hands—long, white, slow-moving hands—caught his eye, and he watched them, fascinated until her voice rang out like an alarm. She sang:

"Child of the dark eyes,

Do you know

What it is makes me kiss you so?
'Tis that your eyes are dark and deep,
And love in their low depths seems to

sleep,

As in those of my love,
When he kissed me so,
Long ago, long ago—"

"Stop!" Masser shrieked. "In that

song is memory—the ache of an old pain—a long, long cry! But you sing it like—*ach!* Send me the gas-saver. Of him I can make a singer. But not of you—not of you!”

She was questioning him now with terror in her face.

“You mean?”

“I mean, like you an electric piano sings *Traviata!* Warmth of life is what you have not. Get it. Work for it—since that is the way things come to you. You have the big, perfect mechanics of a voice, but you do not sing! Song is fire in the heart, breaking through. Your heart is empty—you have starved the warmth out of it. Get it back. Burn that ugly waist and buy a nice one you cannot afford. Fling your legs at cabarets! Drink beer! And fall in love with a married man!”

Hilda sat through his tantrum like a frozen woman, her mind straining to catch the import of the disaster that had broken about her. Had her sacrifice, her poverty and drudgery through the years behind, been not only in vain, but had they destroyed the thing they were meant to serve? And if so—what of the big, perfect mechanics that even *Masse* recognized still remained? Must she take the wreck back to *Elfrida*? Back to the meanness of an installment-plan house? No! Things came to her through work. Very well, then, let work and determination be her means of acquiring this new and unguessed necessity!

Another student came for her lesson, and Hilda left the studio.

THE beer came to the Seventy-sixth Street flat that evening, and Hilda rose from the table, paid for it in the kitchen and drank a surreptitious bottle in the bathroom. The secret libation had its public effect, and little Mrs. Henry Martin couldn't think what had come over Henry that he acted the way he did with the skylarking old maid across the table.

Within a week the plaid waist disappeared, and a lace one took its place. Then the severe mode of hair-dressing gave way before the sharp fragrance of tongs in Hilda's room. In two weeks the

beer and the boarding-house had begun to obliterate the shadows under her cheek-bones.

Conscientiously, almost frantically, she practiced the use of feminine wiles on Henry Martin. And as soon as she felt herself master of a degree of proficiency, she branched away to any man, attached or unattached, that came within her range. When the young Russian librarian called on the student from the Art Institute, Hilda had to hunt music in the living-room. She made a carefully calculated mistake in floors and opened the door of the bachelor flat below, just as the bachelor was sitting down to dinner one evening. She got a volume of “*Court Memoirs*” as a text-book, and spent hours in the art-galleries, hunting types of female allurements. She went out to tea with the bachelor downstairs and had a cocktail instead of tea. As ruthlessly as she had starved soul and body in *Elfrida*, Hilda Mason now quested the warmth of life in New York.

But her voice remained as it had been, big and chilled, like a newly tuned electric piano.

Then *Saxe Clerval* came, filling all the requirements and suggesting more that might have been made. He was married and young and successful and blond and big. He had come East with a big project for his San Francisco firm, and the glamour of distance and affairs was upon him.

Hilda was coming from her lesson when she first saw him. The flat was near the Drive, and *Clerval* was looking out a window as he waited for Mrs. Williams, who had attended school with his mother. Hilda's eye registered a silhouette when she passed the sitting-room door, but her mind was so clouded with the discouragement of her lesson that she did not realize she carried a shadow-picture with her until she reached her room. She turned back.

“Pardon me,” she stammered. “I was expecting some one. I—”

Clerval blinked from the bright light into the dimness of the room. Hilda's face was cool and white, and her blouse was open at the throat.

“I'm sorry,” he apologized. “If you want this room, why—”

"My friend may not come," Hilda murmured. "But I will get some music, while I am here."

She stooped to a pile of music on the floor, and Clerval lifted it to the piano. Like the singing master's his eyes fastened on her white, slow-moving hands. She felt his gaze and looked up, and he went to the window in confusion. She left the room with the music in her arms.

Clerval visited with Mrs. Williams the next evening, and the day following inquired about a room. He was to be in New York longer than he had expected.

When he entered the dining-room Hilda gave him a long, cool look of welcome. The next night she came to table in a gown all chalky white and diaphanous. It was a haunting gown, like layer over layer of strange light, replete with the sensuality of the deliberately chaste.

It had never come from Elfrida.

She excused herself from the coffee and drifted to the piano in the sitting-room. It was just after Clerval left the table to join her that some one remarked about the gown, and Mrs. Henry Martin admitted the old maid was getting handsome, and some one else wondered if the money would last.

WITHIN a week the whole house was gossiping. Clerval, whose first sign of musical appreciation had been the purchase of a dozen dance-records, now talked opera and bought concert-tickets. Hilda got a wide, black hat that shadowed her eyes, and an evening dress, black and low in the back. Never from Elfrida—never!

But the voice remained as big and true and empty as before.

"Volume — looks — everything for a singer you have got, but just—something!" Masser stormed. It was two months after Clerval's advent, and Hilda wore a soft metal-colored gown.

"You said you would make me sing—if—if—" Terror pulled at the waxen smoothness of her face.

"Gott!" Masser replied. "Can I make the bronze Diana in Tiffany's window sing?" His eyes went from her smart hat to her smart shoes.

"How about money? Holding out?"

"You are getting paid, aren't you?" It was a return of her old asperity.

"I am not worrying about me."

"Well, I am worrying about me!" she flared. "Something — a church position — something, has got to turn up."

"Running short?"

"It takes more than I planned. I counted on bare living expenses and lessons. And I thought I would get a position singing."

"If I cannot make you sing,—soon,—you will go back to Elfrida?"

"I said my money was running out. I did not say that."

"If it is only another lesson—or dozen lessons, even — better quit now." With elaborate nonchalance he walked to the window, watching her guilefully.

"Soon I give a concert for Nubert," he continued casually. "She will get an engagement — maybe opera — from it. Many successes I have turned out, but few have had voices like Nubert."

"I sing better than Nubert. My range—"

"Range!" He volleyed from the window toward her, his hands waving distractedly over his head. "*Ja!* You have a range like a siren whistle on a steamboat. But Nubert sings! The mother in her sings, sings, sings! In you the school-teacher—the old maid—the arid virgin—*mein Gott!* You hate children —and Nubert for all the music in the world would not leave the vapor-lamp if Jimmy Nubert barked with croup."

A stain crept up under Hilda's pallor, but she stifled her anger.

"And if Jimmy barks the night of the concert?" she asked breathlessly. "Who will sing—in her place?"

"Aha!" Masser ramped like a sardonic satyr. "The old maid wants the mother's place!" Then he swooped upon her. "Did you do as I said?"

"I gargled—"

"Gargled! Will gargling make you sing? Did you fall in love?"

"I have met interesting people—"

"Meet a blockhead, and fall in love with him. The bigger the blockhead, the more you will love him—the more you will suffer. Live a hundred lives and die a hundred deaths in a minute; then

come to me—and you will sing! But now—bah! Get out that ugly waist—wear it! Why spend money and get no profit? Why do you try to look like a woman when you are dry, barren dust? Go home—back to Elfrida! But leave the gas-saver alone. You are not woman enough for him. Why do you stay here hoping that at the last moment Nubert's youngest will put a bean up his nose—"

"Stop!" Hilda panted. "Don't you dare! I will sing, I tell you. I *will* sing. Whatever I have to do—or have—I can do and have. I will sing Nubert's program—"

"Ha!" Masser laughed appreciatively. "Sing that—just as you blazed it at me, and I will send Jimmy Nubert poisoned peppermints."

Hilda did not hear him. "I will learn Nubert's program," she flamed on. "And maybe—maybe—I'll get the chance to sing it! I will sing—do you hear me? Anything—anything—I have to do to sing, I can do. I gave everything out of my young years for my voice—I can give anything now."

Masser slapped his hands together like a boy. "Sure," he chirped. "And as for money—money comes when there is a will."

The fire burned down in Hilda. She got up and pulled her veil into place and snapped her gloves. Masser put his hands on her shoulder.

"Some day—you will thank Masser," he said. "Some day, when the voice comes, warm and living from the heart,—the broken heart, perhaps,—you will say: 'Masser was right: anything for a great voice—anything!'"

"It is everything for my voice—everything," she said, and shut the studio door behind her.

STRAIGHT up the Avenue she walked to a shop where a single Japanese robe of ivory crêpe was displayed in the window against a background of black brocade. Hesitating only long enough to assure herself of the balance her check-stubs showed, she set her lips in a tight line and went in. Ten minutes later she came out with a parcel under her arm and went on up the Avenue.

Luncheon was ready when Hilda got

home, and merely lifting her veil and rolling back her gloves, she sat down. Before she left the table she looked at Mrs. Williams.

"I am not going to practice," she said. "Mr. Clerval is taking me to a concert, and I am going to rest before I dress. Your nap will be undisturbed."

Mrs. Williams sighed. "With you not practicing, and all the others at their lessons and work, it will be nice—awfully nice."

Hilda took her parcel and left the room.

Half an hour later a tall ivory geisha picked her way down the long hall, carefully preserving the immaculate pinkness of her bare feet, and lay down on the living-room couch with the dark cloud of her hair flung over the cushions.

After what seemed hours in the sunny haze of the room, a key clicked in the lock and long, swift strides came up the hall and paused at the door of the sitting-room. Not a tinge of color mounted under the ivory skin of the geisha on the couch. She lay, breathing through parted lips, her eyelids as still as the carven lids of a goddess.

Red burned across the face of the man in the door. His room was just beyond, and he tried to force himself toward it. But instead he slipped into the sitting-room and poised himself on the edge of a chair.

The sleeper opened calm, uncomprehending eyes. Then, simulating shame and realization, she sat up, drawing her bare feet into the curtain of her kimono and lifting one round arm to drag her hair together. The loose sleeve of her robe fell back, and she tried to drop it again by lowering her upper arm. Altogether a most bewildering picture of beauty in distress was presented. The man on the chair jerked his eyes away, but they came back, again and again.

"Oh," the girl moaned. "My room was stuffy, and I dropped down here—just a minute. I must have gone to sleep. I'll get dressed now—" One pink toe dared the open, but shocked at its own nudity, flew back to shelter. "Please look away," she pleaded. "Oh, don't go in the hall; I have to go that way—"

"Hilda—Hilda!"
stiffened, pushing



"Hilda—Hilda!" His breath was on her neck, under the cloud of her hair. A chill crawled through her flesh, and her arms stiffened, pushing him back. "I can't," she said simply, and despair was in the calm of her voice. "It's no use—I can't."

He strode to the window, his hands clenched in his pockets, his breath windy in his nostrils. He felt her fragrance as she stirred on the couch, saw the white shine of her garment as she rose; he whirled and caught her in his arms.

"Let me go, let me go—" she whimpered.

"Hilda—Hilda!" His breath was on her neck, under the cloud of her hair. A chill crawled through her flesh, and her arms stiffened, pushing him back.

"I can't," she said simply, and despair was in the calm of her voice. "It's no use—I can't."

His arms dropped, and she fell back on the couch, whiter than ivory now, holding her kimono together rigidly at throat and waist. Clerval stared pitifully through the shame that overswept him; then he suddenly began circling the room, searching the mantel, looking under the piano. Hilda wanted to laugh. It was funny, bitterly funny. Her hopes, her needs, her strong resolve, ended—in a low-comedy hunt for a hat. Thoughtless of her thin drapery, she got the hat from under Clerval's chair and gave it to him. A minute later the hall door closed. Standing behind the curtains, Hilda saw Clerval plunge up the street toward the subway.

Well, she had sprung her trap—and caught her own starved years! She was back at the starting-point—the need of money. She had skimmed out her store of money, but lost the warmth of life.

She gathered the silk of her drapery away from the dusty floor and started to her room. The silken texture seemed to scorch her hands. It had cost so much! She had bought it—for an investment. The investment had failed. But had it—irretrievably? Opportunity that retreated sometimes returned, the more eager, for its repulse. Next time she would know how to manage herself—to hold herself in check.

The grim resolution of the old Elfrida days returned!

She dressed carefully. Clerval was not in the dining-room when she went in to dinner. She heard the elevator pass the floor once—twice—a dozen times. But he did not come. The bell in the kitchen rang, and Ellen the maid

brought a small parcel and laid it beside her plate. It was addressed in Clerval's writing.

The sign had come! Opportunity was returning!

After dinner she went to her room and opened the parcel. A note lay inside. She brushed it away and lifted the cover of the velvet box beneath. The clear green of jade shone out, and instinctively she put it against her throat before the mirror. Her skin was like milk back of it. Like milk—or death—she couldn't tell which.

She took up the note and read:

Dear Hilda:

I read once about a reverent ancient who hung a necklace about the throat of the Cnidian Venus. I am awkward at this—but you know what I am trying to make you understand: I am on my knees before your beauty, and I want to give tribute. Before your goodness—the goodness which recoiled from the brute in me to-day—I cannot even raise my eyes. I can only say "Thank you." I am going home to-night. Mrs. Williams will get my check and the address for the baggage in the morning's mail.

Thank you again—thank you—thank you—

SAXE CLERVAL.

She read the note twice and tore it up. Money—money—money! She got her check-book and looked at the stubs. How the kimono had gouged into the balance! Money—money—money!

It was midnight when she reached for a pen and wrote.

Dear Frank:

Before I left Elfrida you offered to give me a sum of money, but you wanted me to marry you to get it. But marriage never has been any part of my plans, and I thought I had enough to last me until my voice began to earn something.

However, many items I had not thought of have taken money since my arrival here, and I am now practically without funds. I am afraid my progress is rather slow because of the hard years in Elfrida. I killed my temperament, so Masser says, by drudgery and denial. It seems silly, but I have got to get it back, and nursing temperament to life is expensive and takes time. Now, I want to lay a proposition before you.

If you will lend me the money you spoke of, I will sign a note in the customary way and pay the principal and interest within a year. It is inconceivable to me that I should not get at least a

church position in that time. Masser is giving a concert this winter at which there is a bare chance I may sing more than the solo in a chorus. Managers always come to Masser's concerts, looking for new voices. I hope for results.

I should be glad to hear that your invention is proving successful. Wasn't there some hope the company would buy it from you, if it worked?

Yours sincerely,

HILDA MASON.

FIVE days later a man at the door asked Ellen for Miss Mason. Hilda in her room heard and came running down the hall.

"Frank!" she cried, and stood in the shadow, waiting for Ellen to go.

"I got your letter," the man explained. "I couldn't bear to think of you—here—needing money. Anyway, I wanted to see you—awfully—"

"Come to the living-room," she said, and he followed down the hall.

"What a beauty you are, Hilda—what a beauty!" They were seated at opposite sides of the room. "I always knew it—but my!"

Unconsciously she inventoried and appraised him even as he talked, going over his clothes, noting that he wore no gloves, that even the Russian librarian knotted his tie with a difference. Still, she was glad to see him—so glad that a kind of geniality ran through the chill of her troubled soul.

"You needn't have come," she said.

"You never did understand all the necessities, Hilda."

She winced. "Have you—can you—"

"It's about that I came. You see—after you left, I didn't see why I should save—and so I went into my invention with my whole heart and all my money. Castings and things take a lot. I used all I had."

She dropped her hands in her lap and stared dully.

"But I am still at the office. I still have my salary."

"Yes?" she prompted.

"Every other week I could send you a check—if—if—"

"Yes?"

"But what would they say at home—my checks coming back indorsed by you—or even if I had money-orders made to you?"

"What difference would it make what they said?"

"All the difference in the world—to me."

She tried to speak, but failed.

"But if you married me—"

She crossed to the piano, her shoulders heaving angrily.

"Hilda—you never did understand!" He followed and stood behind her.

"Give me credit, this once, for wanting to make things better, not worse, for you! We could be married to-day. That would make it right for you to take my money. Then I could go away—home—don't you understand?"

She stared at him incredulously.

"And afterward," he continued, "—well, you'll be a singer, and I'll be a drudge in Elfrida. The courts settle such things."

"But now—now, Frank? How can you spare your money, if your invention costs so much?"

"I can get extra work Sundays and evenings. And why should I be on Easy Street, when you're up against it?"

She was silent, fighting back uncountable tears.

"I don't want anybody here to know," she managed to say. He took her hands in his and held them against his breast.

"Whatever you say!" he said. "Shall we go out and find a preacher?"

"Wait a minute—I'll get my things," she answered.

IT was a long time after that before

Hugo Masser asked any more questions or gave way to personalities with Hilda. At times he sat in his chair or walked the room, cocking his head and listening speculatively, as she sang. But he left it for Hilda herself to precipitate a storm.

"Shall I run over Nubert's program?" she asked. "I know it, but as the concert is in two weeks, you had better hear me."

"Nubert's program! When did I give you Nubert's program?"

"You said she might not sing at the concert—"

"Not sing? At her own concert? *Mein Gott!* Have I not given you the best solo in the chorus? One year you



Masser pushed her onto the platform, and an accompanist followed and sat at the piano. And then the little struggling bird began to weave through the stacks, mounting and dropping on its sorry pinions. And her voice was the bird weaving up through the notes of the piano, rising and falling, beating on and on toward something beyond.

have been with me—and you want Nubert's program!"

"Somebody has to understudy Nubert for the concert. There is little enough chance that I will get to sing. But I have listened and worked like a dog—on the bare chance that I might. I have made sacrifices—another has made sacrifices to keep me studying. It's a matter of conscience not to let any opportunity go by."

"Now listen." Masser was peculiarly calm all at once. "Men with concert, church and even opera engagements to give come to my concerts. Nubert can have her pick, if she sings. But if you sing instead—what will happen? Will you scare them away with your big alarm-clock voice, so they never come to hear you again? Are you ready to take such a chance? The last few lessons, I have felt hope for you. But it is faint yet—faint. Has something happened? Tell me. My concerts mean much to me."

"I am working hard; that is all. That is the way I get things."

"How about the married man?"

"Oh, that's no use. There is only one way for me—work!"

She put her hands up to straighten her hat, and in a flash Masser's quick sympathy caught the meaning of the straw under the covering veil. Straw! And it was November!

"Never mind," he purred. "Next lesson we go through Nubert's program. And about the married man—maybe Masser was wrong. To some it comes one way—to some another."

"Thanks," said Hilda, and she started to the door.

When her hand was on the knob he called softly, and she turned back.

"You aint mad at old Papa Masser for what he says?"

"It's not that," she said, smiling wanly.

"Money?" He came toward her with his eyebrows like solicitous crescents under the glazed dome of his head.

"Yes, in a way. But I am more worried because—my remittance is overdue."

"Don't worry. It will come."

"Oh yes—it will come. But I am thinking about sickness—accident."

A rapturous light broke on Masser's face.

"Wait a minute," he said. "There came a proof-sheet of Nubert's program this morning. Maybe it will cheer you up." He pattered across the floor and through a door. Hilda waited.

"Here!" He came back, waving the sheet. "Take it home."

"Thanks." She folded the program into her purse.

There was no letter for her among the letters on the hall-seat when she got home. She went to her room and surveyed the dresser, the desk, the bookshelf; nothing. She found the last envelope from Elfrida. It had contained nothing but a check, and it was dated three weeks before. It was silly to worry. Both Masser and Mrs. Williams would wait, and the check would come, some time. She tried to practice, but her voice was sick and heavy.

Next morning there came an envelope, type addressed, containing a check made directly to her. She shook it and ran her fingers into the corners. But except for the check it was barren. She wrote to the mill office in Elfrida demanding an explanation.

A week later a typed letter from the rolling-mills bookkeeper informed her that hereafter checks would be made directly to her. She waited two days, fighting foreboding and anger. Practice was impossible.

At the end of the second day she wrote to the mill physician in Elfrida, demanding information in her right as Frank Wilton's wife.

The day of Nubert's concert she stayed in bed, obeying, partly Masser and partly her own physical weariness. She propped the proof-sheet of the program against her knees, and the chair and floor beside her were littered with music. Now and then, as she lay against the pillows, she opened her eyes to study the program; then closing them again, she read the black notes that danced against the curtain of her lids. Note for note, the program was photographed on her mind; and she went over it and over it again and again, jerking her mind back sharply when it strayed, wondering why she had ever hoped to sing it, realizing

the blessed narcotic that study afforded. Over and over the notes she went; the bars and stops began to look strange—like the black stacks and smoked shelters of the mills in Elfrida. Once she had seen a bird with torn wings beat up through the smoke and stacks and roofs, falling and rising, climbing the thick air on failing pinions—like a sorry little song rising and falling and climbing through printed notes.

Ellen knocked, and still half dreaming, Hilda opened the door and held out a trembling hand. Almost before the door was closed behind Ellen, Hilda had torn open an envelope and was reading a typewritten letter.

My dear Mrs. Wilton:

I am in charge of your husband's case, and while no unusual symptoms have arisen, we always consider typhoid serious. The company is doing all possible, as much because they like Wilton as because his recently installed invention has proven him a valuable associate in business. In his rational moments he insists you shall not be notified of his illness; but as he calls for you in his delirium, and is a pretty sick man besides, I think it would be well for you to come home. Sincerely,

WILLIAM GRAY, M. D.

While she was still rereading the last lines, Hilda was out of bed, calling to Ellen to search out the next train for Elfrida on the timetable in the desk, and shivering in her bathrobe, she jerked off the receiver and demanded Masser's number.

Masser himself answered.

"I'm going to Elfrida," she shrieked.

"Sickness—"

"Come down here," Masser ordered.

"I can't. Some one's sick. I'm going—"

"When's your train?"

"Don't know. The express goes at midnight, but I want an earlier—"

"Come down here. I'll get you to Elfrida. But come here first."

"You don't understand!"

"Come down here!" he thundered and rang off.

Hilda snatched the folder from Ellen and traced a trembling finger across a line of figures.

"Midnight—the express—and here's one—at six."

SHE took the subway, and Masser opened the door before she knocked.

"I looked it up," he shouted. "Train at midnight?"

"There is one at six."

"Slow—side-tracked at every village."

"But I've got to be moving. I can't stand it until midnight."

"Who is it? The gas-saver?"

She nodded, and he put his hand out and covered both of hers.

"You take the midnight train. You have to sing."

She laughed harshly.

"Nubert's Jimmy—accident! He's on a farm in New Jersey while his mother is here getting ready for the concert." Invention failed him further.

"Poor Nubert!" Hilda moaned.

"Poor Nubert—nothing. Already she has two offers for concert, and has made her choice."

"I was thinking—about Jimmy—how she must suffer."

"She don't know yet. I don't know her hotel, and cannot 'phone her. When she comes, I will tell her."

Hilda was too deep in misery to perceive how nebulous was Jimmy's case.

"So—you sing the program!" Masser added.

"I'm going to Elfrida—at six!" Hilda almost screamed.

"Look here, young woman!" Masser brought her eyes to his. "You sing tonight—or you never come back to me. Understand?"

"Yes," she assented. "But the train is at six—"

"If you stay and sing, I get a telegram from Elfrida for you, every hour, and at midnight I put you on the fast train. If you go at six you will be tied up, side-tracked—away from a telegraph—"

"But I can't sing!" It was as though she only just realized what he demanded of her. "Even before the letter came, I was so sick with worry that the notes seemed to me like stacks at the mills. And when I tried to think of the song, all I could remember was a bird I once saw, beating up through the smoke—lost—hurt—"

"All right," Masser crooned. "You sing the song like it was that bird. You

see," he went on, stroking the smooth dark satin of her hair, "without you telling me, I know how it is. He sent you money to study. He had to work harder—maybe when he needed to rest. But he did it—because some time your time would come, and you would sing. Your song would repay him, you, everybody. All right! For that he worked, and made himself sick. Now comes your time to sing—and you wont sing. Rather you take a dinky train and sit on a side-track, than sing like a sane woman—and go quick to him, on the express. You think that is right to him? You think that is square?"

"Oh," Hilda cried, "I hadn't thought of it that way. I'll have to sing—have to sing—for his sake, wont I?"

AT five o'clock telegrams began arriving from the mill physician in Elfrida.

At eight Nubert came, big, beautiful, wrapped in furs. Hilda saw Masser whisper in the mother's ear, heard a frightened cry, felt the stir of fur-brushed air as Nubert flew to the door and the elevator.

Ten minutes later the last telegram came to the studio and the boy was instructed to deliver the next to the hall. From the first the messages had not varied. No change—no change—

A chorus opened the program, and Hilda heard another voice mounting in the solo she had learned. Then Masser came and put back her coat. The time had come! Her heart was an abyss, but out of it she had to send a song. Frantically she grappled with her tortured mind, demanding that the notes of Nubert's songs marshal themselves in order. But all the picture her closed eyes carried was a wilderness of black stacks—and among them a bird flew, beaten and broken. Masser pushed her onto the platform, and an accompanist followed and sat at the piano.

And then the little struggling bird began to weave through the stacks, mounting and dropping on its sorry pinions. And her voice was the bird weaving up through the notes of the piano, rising and falling, beating on and on toward something beyond.

When it was done, she turned to Masser. He nodded excitedly, and she wondered why. There was a crash out in front. It was applause—but she did not care. A message from Elfrida was due, and nothing else was of interest to her.

As she left the platform, she put her hands out to Masser. He turned her about peremptorily.

"Go back," he whispered. "Are you crazy that you don't go back?"

A blue-capped boy wormed his way through the crowd at the door. Hilda reached for the envelope he carried, but Masser snatched it and tore it open. Then he smiled and wiped his forehead, and handed it to her.

"Better," was all it said.

Hilda put the yellow envelope down between the jet of her gown and the white of her bosom. The crashing noise was renewed in front. "I don't need an accompanist," she said, and stepped out. The accompanist failed to understand and started after her, but Masser pulled him back. Hilda seated herself on the long piano-bench, found the pedal with her foot, turned back her gloves and stretched her long white hands. She sang:

"Child of the dark eyes,
Do you know

What it is makes me kiss you so?
'Tis that your eyes are dark and deep,
And love in their low depths seems to
sleep,

As in those of my love,
When he kissed me so,
Long ago, long ago—"

She left the piano while still the last note sobbed into the silence of the audience. Before she reached the wings she had the telegram out, studying its brevity for further meaning.

Masser's face was working convulsively.

"*Mein Gott! Mein Gott!*" he choked. "What have you done? It is the voice calling at the gates of heaven! What have you done?"

Her lids dropped over her eyes, and tears fell upon her cheeks.

"I did what you told me to do," she whispered. "I fell in love with a married man—my husband!"



You ought to have seen her. That wife of mine was dressed to kill, and maybe you think she didn't look swell! The minute I looked her over I wanted to go along, but she said it was no occasion for men.

—“*The Alibi Butte*”

"A woman may not have any more sense than a man," says Mr. "Spec" McCormick, "but she's got a different kind of sense. When it comes to busting up alibis, she's just naturally gifted."

The Alibi Buster

By Bozeman Bulger

Author of "A Major-League Mother-in-Law," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY WILLIAM VAN DRESSER

THE scar formed a distinct crescent, nearly two inches long, just below the right cheekbone. It seemed strangely out of place on the cheery map of "Spec" McCormick. When he smiled, as he often did, the upper end of the sunny wrinkle would collide with that ugly scar and stop, giving one side of his face a most sinister expression. It was fascinating to watch.

"Spec," so nicknamed because of the colored glasses he wore while playing the sunfield, was a happy soul, his smile as much an asset to the champion Grays as his ability to hit the ball. His popularity is what heightened the mystery of the scar. McCormick had never explained or mentioned it to a soul on the club, and it was a common understanding that no one must discuss it in his presence. Occasionally the older players and veteran newspaper men tried to get enlightenment, but hints and thinly veiled suggestions availed us nothing. We had no recollection of the scar's having been acquired on the ball-field, and we felt certain that he did not get it in a brawl. "Spec" was never quarrelsome. Old-timers declared he did not have the scar when he first broke in—said he went away smiling, one fall, and came back in the spring with the scar, still smiling—on one side of his face; the other side was in eclipse. And that is all we knew.

It was on the day following the tenth anniversary of Spec's wedding that he told us. One of the younger players was

about to be married, and all hands were giving him terrifying advice when McCormick addressed the prospective groom and amazed us by revealing the secret of the crescent scar. On the ground that it would instruct and enlighten future newly-weds Spec consented that his story be given as he told it—to wit:

TO make sure that you married men get me at the start, I want to ask you something:

Did you ever come to breakfast of a morning after being to a banquet all night and try to tell the wife the funny jokes you had heard around the old festal board?

You have, have you?

Well, did you ever get that expression—you know the one I mean—on her face as you repeated those bright sayings?

I guess you never noticed when you got to the funny part of the stories how they kind of died on you and didn't seem near as funny as they did the night before? No, I guess you didn't! You never saw them run right into a fog when the wife handed you one of those grapefruit expressions and looked out the window! Don't your face feel funny when you're about to break out into one of them phony laughs and the old smile freezes stiff?

The best smile-freezer in the world is—well, something like this from the woman who has promised to honor and obey but never had no such notion:

"Well, I always thought men were fools, and now I know it. If that's what

you stay up all night for, losing sleep and upsetting your stomachs, you ought to have a guardian."

Fellows,—married fellows, I mean,—if you haven't heard that line of stuff, you are either deaf or you haven't been to a banquet—that's all. Of course, with a bachelor it doesn't make any difference. He doesn't know anything, anyhow. Still, if he'll string along with me he may get wise to something that will save him a lot of trouble later on.

It may be possible that some outside folks—I am putting this paragraph in for the benefit of the general public—never thought a ball-player had domestic problems or that he has to be broken in as a regular union husband the same as the rest of you. If you thought that, you've got another guess coming. A ball-player has to frame up more alibis at home than anybody in the world. I'll bet there are mighty few of you who ever got as many as ten mash-notes from girl fans—girls that you didn't know or ever heard of—in a week. I've had half that many a day, and I'm no Lothario, at that. Just to give you an idea, one of them wrote me this:

"I don't know if you are married or not, but if you are I will always feel that you have thrown your life away. Nobody could admire you and sympathize with your efforts like me."

Now go home and try to square one like that if you can!

Fellows, I joined the alibi-club the minute I looked that preacher in the eye and said "I will." And while I have used some of those alibis so old that they'll answer to their first names,—ones supposed to be wifeproof,—I've never got away with one yet.

A woman may not have any more sense than a man, but she's got a different kind of sense. When it comes to busting up alibis, she's just naturally gifted. She can call you 'on suspicion and get away with it nine times out of ten when you couldn't even get by on fact.

This may give you the idea that I am henpecked, and I've kind of got a feeling that I am. Spec McCormick, the same being myself, is one of the few fellows that you ever met who admits being

scared of his wife. And I've noticed that all the fellows who love the old woman and want peace and quietude around the old fireside are not pulling any of that cave-man stuff. They may not admit it, but there aint a six-footer in the world who can't be made to jump through a one-inch knot-hole by a little hundred-and-ten-pound woman if he cares much about his home.

Didn't you ever go home with a couple of drinks under your belt, all swelled up about some great idea you had, and then find yourself cut down so that you could wear a six-and-a-quarter hat after the wife had finished the first sentence of her opinion? No, I guess not!

WE ball-players don't take many drinks during a season and rarely attend a banquet, but when the season is over and the frolics start in the fall, things don't break so well for the wife.

My Mary is the finest woman in the world, and I don't think there is anybody who will not say that our son Bobby is the brightest and best-developed kid for his age they ever saw. Of course, there are some kids just as smart, but they are older. When Bobby is their age, he ought to be cleaning up in high-school. Already he is drawing pictures in the back of the dictionary and the cook-books that certainly show he's got genius. The old signs are there, all right.

You'd think I was boasting if I told you things about Mary. But, to give you a line, all the women in our set call up and ask her what they should have and how they should serve it when they are going to have a fancy dinner for swell company. That's Mary.

The only real run-in I ever had with Mary—and now I'm getting down to my story—started over one of those banquets that I was just telling about.

While we fellows were being dined nearly every night by the fans, who were still worked up about us winning the pennant, Mary and ten or twelve of her friends, most of them wives of other ball-players, had been having theater-and moving-picture-parties. So as to have a good time they would reserve a whole row of seats and be together.

Mostly they went to matinées, but sometimes they'd go at night, especially if there was something good coming off. I never kicked about Mary having these good times. In fact, I was in favor of it. A man likes to see a woman have a good time, I believe, lots more than a woman likes to see a man have a good time—unless she is with him. I've quit trying to make a woman understand how three or four fellows can get together and enjoy themselves sitting around a table and talking until two o'clock in the morning. They can't get it—that's all.

"What could you have been talking about all the time?" she'll ask, and to save your life, you can't tell her.

Well, to get down to cases, I came home one night, or rather one morning about four o'clock, feeling good and still smiling to myself about those stories that some of the speakers had told at the banquet. I sleep in a room at the end of the hall; Mary and little Bobby occupy the one next to it.

I thought I heard something moving in Mary's room, but I wasn't sure and finally went to bed thinking I had slipped in without anybody knowing it. I had to go through with a bluff and got up at eight o'clock pretending to feel fresh as a daisy, and I got to the dining-room just as Mary was having her breakfast.

"You must feel pretty bad," she said, "doing without sleep and putting a lot of stuff into your stomach that'll make you sick."

"Why, I wasn't out late—" I was starting to alibi, but something in the wife's face made me pull up.

"I know what time you came in," she announced. "I got up and looked at the clock, and it was ten minutes after four. That's a fine time of night for a man—an athlete—to be getting in."

"Oh, it was a great affair," I started, trying to give myself a little false pep, "the smartest crowd of men I ever sat with. You just ought to have heard—say, here's one Ted Williams told. Listen: It seems there was an Irishman named Pat, and he ran into his friend Mike at the Pennsylvania station. Mike says—now, let's see, what was it Mike

said? Oh, I want you to get that. When I see Ted I'll get him to tell me. It was awfully funny the way he told it—"

"Yes, that is funny," she interrupted while buttering me a piece of toast.

"Don't be such a crab," I said. "It was a peach of a story. Just wait till I get it right."

But fellows, do you know, I never could remember what Mike said at the Pennsylvania station and what made it so funny.

"What did you have to eat?" Mary asked.

"It was a corking dinner—let's see: started off with some oysters and celery—I remember that, all right. Yes, and some kind of a soup. I tried to remember how it was made so that you could serve it the first time we had company. Now, let me see—no, I can't get it now, but there was some kind of a roast, and they wound up with the best coffee I ever tasted—except, except this."

"Must have been a beautiful dinner," she remarked. "What did you drink?"

"Oh, I don't know—just the regular kind of things that they always drink. Anyway, I didn't drink much of it. Those things never feel right in my stomach, and I always pass them up when I can do it without offending anybody. But there was another fellow there who told an experience about being in the war-zone—in Germany, I think it was. Gee, it was the most interesting thing—taught me more than I ever would have learned reading. Let me see, just what was it he said? Oh, yes. He was thrown off a train in Switzerland, I think—"

"I thought you said Germany?"

"That's right, too. It must have been Germany. I can't think right now, when you ask me so many questions, just how it went, but it was a bird. And say, he told a joke at the finish that was a corker. Something about an Irish soldier named Dennis getting a German's shoes—had to kill eight men before he got a pair to fit, or something like that. 'S funny I can't remember those things. Hereafter I'm going to put them down on paper so you can enjoy 'em."

"Did you have anything to say?" she

asked, picking up the morning paper and looking through the department-store ad's.

"Yes, they called on me, and the fellows tell me I got away fine. I told them at the start that I didn't know much about speech-making, and that kind of set me in right. Then I told a baseball story."

"Was it something like those you've been telling me?"

"It was a good one, all right, and seemed to take. I don't remember just what it was, but you ought to see the way those fellows laughed."

"It must have been very comical."

"Well, anyway, we had a great time and I'm mighty glad I went. A fellow can always learn something, no matter where he goes."

"I don't see," she finally opened up, "why it is they don't fix up good times like that for women, sometimes. All the pleasant occasions seem to be arranged for men. You can go out and eat your dinners, fill up on wine and tell your stories while we women have to sit at home and figure on what we are going to order from the grocer the next day. All good times are for men. Why don't they get up something for the wives?"

"I wish they would," I agreed, and right then and there the big idea struck me full in the face. "Why don't you women get together and have an all-night dinner? You could take that matinee club of yours and have a bird of a time. That's a real idea. Get busy on the 'phone and call up Annie Williams and the other wives. I'll see some of the boys, and I know they'll be for it. Are you game?"

"Half of them wouldn't come," she objected. "Several have children, and they'd be afraid to leave them."

At that, I could see she was wobbling, and I urged her on.

"Sure they'd come," I said. "Why, I'd be tickled to death to stay here with Bobby and Big Ben." Big Ben, by the way, was our bulldog, and he was as fine a dog as you ever looked at.

"Well, I don't know—"

"Go on," I kept after her. "Call up some of your friends and see. Why wouldn't it be a good idea for you to

have a dinner party after your trip to a show. It would give you an idea how men enjoy themselves."

I GOT out of the house just as soon as I could and went to hunt up some of the boys. When I returned home for dinner, I found that Mary had been on the job and was going to the dinner idea, hook, line and sinker. The women-folks had decided to show their husbands what it means to be left home at night.

Ted Williams and I had a friend who ran a very fine hotel, near the theater, and he said he would give the girls a corking dinner and do it reasonable. In twenty-four hours it was all fixed. The big dinner for the wives, and wives alone, was to come off in the middle of the week, and they were to stay out just as late as they wanted to. In fact, Mary gave me a hint that she might not get home until daylight.

I must admit I had a motive in my scheme other than just to see the women have a good time. You see, I always had a notion that women had it pretty soft at home—that is, I thought that way then. They don't have to worry about making good so as to keep the old pot boiling. All they have to do is to sit around taking it easy while the fellow has to be digging up the coin all the time. Taking care of a baby, I thought, wasn't much trouble. Just put him to bed, sit up and read the papers, and that's all there is to it. Pretty soft, eh? The object of reading the papers, as I figured then, was just to see how good a dress could be bought for the money the old man earned by walloping a baseball or catching a long fly in a sunfield.

Mary's eagerness over this scheme of having a banquet among the women tickled me right down to the ground. It isn't often you get a chance to show a woman up—make her job at home look easy.

"Are you going to make a speech?" I asked Mary, as she came from the 'phone after a long talk with Annie Williams. This conversation, I could tell, was about what to wear.

"Me make a speech?" she said. "I'd feel like a fool getting up there, trying to say something funny."

"You are going to have some kind of talking, aren't you?"

"Well, we are thinking up a novelty. I promised not to tell anybody, but I know you won't say anything. We thought it would be a dandy idea for each of us to read a short paper on how to prepare the different kinds of dishes that were served at the banquet. Mine is the salad."

"It ought to be a mighty interesting night," I remarked. (Fellows, can you beat it?) "There's many a laugh in a salad."

"Never you mind about our banquet," she snapped. "We'll have it to suit ourselves."

AND I guess they did. It came off on a Thursday night—the night I had promised to go out with Ted Williams. I forgot to tell him that I had to stay home with little Bobby. They haven't got a kid, and of course he didn't think about it.

All the women went in taxicabs, and two of them came by for Mary.

You ought to have seen her. That wife of mine was dressed to kill, and maybe you think she didn't look swell! The minute I looked her over I wanted to go along, but she said it was no occasion for men.

When they had gone, I got myself a good magazine, a couple of sporting papers and a lot of cigarettes and set myself for the night. Mary had told me to go to bed whenever I got ready and not to bother about her—that she was going to make a night of it:

About nine o'clock little Bobby began to get sleepy, and believe me, I wasn't sore at him for that. He had interfered with my reading for an hour by asking all the questions in the world. Bobby was four years old then and as full of conversation as a bush-leaguer when he first breaks in.



Fellows, did you ever try to dress a four-year-old baby? If you haven't, you've got something coming to you.

Before consenting to go to bed Bobby pulled at my leg and pointed at the dog.

"Blen—go out," he said. He always called Big Ben "Blen." In a minute or two I tumbled to the fact that it was time to take the dog out. The kid was on before I was. I reached for the collar and chain, and Big Ben began to bark. It then occurred to me that if I took Big Ben out I'd have to leave Bobby alone. I couldn't do that, but that dog had to be taken out just the same. After thinking the problem over for some time, I found there was just one thing to do! I'd have to dress Bobby and take him along. He was sleepy, too. But when I talked of his going out, the kid perked up and opened his eyes in delight.

Fellows, did you ever try to dress a four-year-old baby? If you haven't, you've got something coming to you. I always thought a ball-player had to put on all the rigging there was, but a four-year-old kid has got a demon athlete beat four ways from the ace. All of Bobby's going-out clothes were rolled up in a wad and chunked in a corner of the closet. How women figure 'em out I don't know. There were five or six different pieces, and it took a card of safety pins to fasten on the first layer. I stuck to it like a man, cursing under my breath all the time, and that confounded dog barking at the top of his voice. Bobby was also whining and fretting—one lovely time! Finally I got to the top layer of clothes and had to slip the kid into one of those little brown suits that make 'em look like teddy-bears.

When everything was ready and I had dried the perspiration from my forehead, we started. I had Bobby by one hand and held the dog-chain in the other—you know you can't let a dog run loose in some parts of New York. Once on the street, Big Ben started jumping and pulling at the chain while little Bobby was pulling back the other way. I got so mad once that I turned loose the chain, and then I had an awful time catching the dog, because I couldn't turn Bobby loose to run after him. Picking Bobby up in my arms, I started on a wild sprint and was tearing along the street, calling to the dog, when I ran right into Ted Williams and a friend.

"We were just going to get you," Ted told me after he had caught Big Ben. "While the women-folks are having their shindig, we might as well have a good time. I've got my car up at the corner."

"But what am I going to do with Bobby?" I wanted to know. "I can't leave him at home alone."

"Take him along," suggested Ted, not knowing anything about babies. "You ought to make a regular fellow out of that boy. Don't let him stay tied to his mother's apron-strings."

"Well, wait till I go back and get a heavy coat and leave this dog."

We all went back to my flat and put some more stuff around Bobby, who was getting mighty sleepy. Still, Ted had a way of making faces and jumping around like a monkey that amused the kid a whole lot. If I ever have to raise another kid, I'm going to hire that Ted Williams to entertain him. It will be a good job for him when he gets too old to play ball or go around telling those stories about Mike and Pat.

Having got everything ready, we were starting out again when Big Ben let out an awful yelp and began scratching on the door. His barks could be heard all over the apartment-house.

"Some of the folks'll get sore and complain about that dog, I'm afraid, Mr. McCormick," the elevator-man said to me.

"I don't know what to do, then," I said, turning to Ted.

"Oh, take him along too," he suggested, "and make a regular party of it."

AS Ted had his car along, we decided to go out to a fashionable road-house on one of the automobile parkways. It looked like a big night.

It must have been after ten o'clock when our queer-looking party pulled up at the road-house. Bobby was so nearly asleep that I had to carry him in my arms. This was new stuff on the door-man, and he looked at us as if he thought we had gone wrong in the bean.

"I'm sorry, sir," he explained, "but dogs are not allowed in the dining-room."

This was a new problem. I explained that Big Ben was a well-behaved dog and all that, but there was nothing doing. There was nobody around who would take care of the brute, so we finally decided to tie him to the wheel of the car, the door-man promising to keep an eye on him for a twenty-five-cent tip.

Getting a table inside, we tried to feed Bobby on lemonade and a piece of cake, but he was too sleepy to take much interest. Near by there was a big leather chair, and I bundled up the kid and put him in it. Every once in a while Bobby would start crying for his mother, but finally dropped into a heavy sleep. Ted had just started to repeat that story about what Mike said to Pat at the Pennsylvania station, when there was a terrible commotion outside, and the door-man came in to tell us that Big Ben was in a fight, a stray dog having jumped on him while he was tied. Out we went to get that settled, leaving Bobby in the chair. While we were straightening out the dog matter, Bobby woke up and started crying, and when we got back in, three women had hold of him and were denouncing the people who had gone away and deserted such a fine-looking baby.

That practically broke up the party, and we went away from there. On the way back, though, we stopped at a place where we were better known and they let the whole party come in. This made it easier and we had one whale of a time until I looked at the clock and saw it was after midnight.

Something told me that I had better be getting back home, though I felt sure that Mary would be out until a late hour in the morning.

I cautioned Ted about saying anything about us being out with Bobby and Big Ben, and he was wise.

We pulled up at the front door of the apartment-house at one o'clock; and fellows, when I got a slant at the entrance I almost dropped through the bottom of that car. There sat Mary McCormick on the edge of the steps, with tears streaming down her cheeks and a big policeman telling her he would do what he could.

I could see Ted Williams turning a

little pale, and believe me, there was quite a stirring at the roots of my hair. If ever there was a guy in Dutch, I was that fellow.

"Why, Mary," I cried, "what are you doing here at this time of night?"

"Don't speak to me," she ordered. "Give me that child!"

She fairly jerked Bobby out of the car, and he woke up crying. Big Ben jumped to the sidewalk and began jumping up on Mary's swell evening gown.

"What are you doing out here on the street?" I wanted to know, trying to act brave-like.

"I've got to stay on the streets, I guess, when my husband locks up the house and goes off with the key. For two hours I have been standing around this entrance and walking up and down the corridor."

"Couldn't you get in, dear?"

"Don't 'dear' me," she ordered. "Give me my child, and you can stay out all night if you want to."

In the meantime Ted Williams had started his car and sneaked around the corner at high speed. It was no place for him.

"Couldn't the elevator-man let you into the apartment?" I asked as I fumbled for the key.

"You know there are no extra keys," she said, "and we couldn't break down that metal door. I suppose I'll die of pneumonia, and you wont care. The only thing that will keep me from dying is the fear that you will not take care of my child and bring him up properly. You are a fine man to bring up a boy—taking him out at midnight!"

"But what became of the banquet?" I insisted on asking questions. "I thought you were going to stay late."

"Nobody stayed late, and I left earlier than any of them."

"Any trouble?"

"The only trouble was that something told me my boy would not be taken care of. I went to the telephone and called up to see if he was all right. There was no answer, and I called again and again. Do you think I could eat a foolish old banquet when I didn't know what had happened to my baby?"

"Why, you might have known—"

"Know nothing! I felt that something was wrong, and I ordered a taxicab and came here as fast as I could. The driver was arrested for speeding, but you can settle that in the morning. I told him you would."

"You told him what?"

"You shut up. I don't want you to speak to me. And then when I got home—when—when—" Then Mary started crying. "When I did get home," she finally broke out, "the house was locked, the baby gone and I had no key! I sent for the police to help hunt for him."

MARY fairly tore the clothes off Bobby, crying hysterically all the time. Bobby looked at her in wonder.

"Where's Mr. Ted?" he asked, rousing from his drowsiness. "I want him make funny faces."

"There!" screamed Mary. "You've already ruined that boy. In another year, if I wasn't here, you'd have him running around every night with a lot of rowdies."

All of a sudden I remembered what Mary had said about notifying the police. Then it occurred to me what would happen if the newspaper men went around to the police station and found out that Spec McCormick, well-known outfielder of the champion Grays, had disappeared with a baby. Already I could see it in print.

I made a dash for the telephone and got the police station. The lieutenant happened to be a friend of mine, and when I told him the kid had been found I could hear him chuckle.

"It's all right, Spec," he said. "We didn't put the case on the blotter. When the patrolman came in, he told us about the wife bawling you out at the door. We have a lot of them cases."

I went back to the room, but Mary had locked the door, and I guess had gone to bed. Anxious to square myself in some way, I rapped on the door, but she wouldn't answer. She had even taken the dog in with her, and I was the most "alone" fellow in New York.

I didn't sleep much that night, because of my mind working on alibis. I tried to figure out some way to lay it

all on Ted Williams, but I knew that would make it worse. Besides, it would get Ted in bad at home.

The only way to do, I finally decided, was to laugh it off the next morning, but somehow I couldn't think of anything real comical to spring at the breakfast table.

I got up feeling a little better but still in fear and trembling. I dressed very carefully and waited until I heard dishes rattling, and then I went into the dining-room.

Mary was seated at the table with Bobby making faces at her, trying to imitate Ted Williams. She didn't look up when I went in.

"Why, greetings, little banqueteer!" I says, trying to appear full of good humor and conversation. "And how's the old sport?" I adds, to Bobby. He made the cutest face at me you ever saw. The wife also made a face at the plate she was looking into; but somehow it didn't seem so cute.

"I think I would be a little more dignified,—at least more considerate,—if I were you," said Mary. "I trust you feel satisfied, now that you've kept your wife and baby up all night."

"All night?"

"That child was so nervous he has not slept five hours; and this morning I simply could not keep him in bed. I suppose you'd like to see us all lose our health. Bobby tells me that you even got the dog in a fight. . . . What are you standing there for? Sit down and eat your breakfast."

"Aint you going to kiss your old man?" I bantered.

"Don't talk foolishness to me. My nerves are so unstrung I feel as if I would go wild. Don't sit there staring at me."

For a few minutes I nibbled at my toast, trying to think up something to say that would get Mary in a good humor. All of a sudden I thought of the paper she was to have read at the banquet.

"By the way, old woman," I inquired, "how did your salad speech go?"

"My salad speech?"

"Yes, the paper you was to read. Didn't you get called on?"



William von Dressel

I went back to the room, but Mary had locked the door, and I guess had gone to bed. Anxious to square myself in some way, I rapped on the door, but she wouldn't answer. She had even taken the dog in with her, and I was the most "alone" fellow in New York.

"Don't talk to me about that terrible thing. We didn't get a chance to finish our meal, knowing that something would go wrong at home. The minute they found I couldn't get you, nearly every one of them started to the different telephone-booths."

I BROKE out in a loud laugh — one of them phony laughs — you know the kind. Mary froze up in a second. I should have caught that look in her eye, but I didn't.

"I don't see anything so funny about it," she said.

"But that isn't what I was laughing at," I explain — and also lies. "I just remembered what it was I had to tell you. Oh, it's awful funny."

"What's funny?"

"Listen: I've got that story straight that I was trying to tell you."

"That story?"

"Yes, Ted Williams straightened me out on it last night and also showed me the trick that goes with it."

I should have known from Mary's face that I was treading on dangerous ground. The way she gripped her coffee-cup should have tipped me off. But you see, I made the mistake of thinking that I was funny — that the only way to get along with a woman is by joshing.

"Yes," I went on, "I know how it was now, and I want to tell you what it was Mike said to Pat that day in the Pennsylvania station. You ought to hear Ted tell it."

In the narration of this ancient joke,—though I didn't know it was ancient then,—it is necessary to arrange two forks and a spoon in such a way that the forks are supposed to represent two men walking down the street. It is quite a trick to fasten the forks together by their prongs, and then by manipulating the spoon which holds them in an upright position, make them walk. I never was much good at them table tricks, anyhow; but I was doing the best I could this time so as to get Mary out of that grouch, at the same time alibi-ing myself.

"One of these forks, you see," I explained to Mary, "is Mike, and the other is Pat. They are good friends now and stick close together, but they are to fall out later."

"Don't bother me with such idiotic talk," she snapped, "or I'll leave the table. I've heard enough of your—"

"Now, wait a minute," I begged. "This is going to be good."

"You see," I went on, "Pat met Mike, and they were holding hands, just as these two forks are, when Mike says: 'Hello, Pat, where are you going?'"

"They were standing at the entrance to the Pennsylvania station, and Pat says: 'I am just starting south on a pleasure trip!'"

"Now, watch the forks, honey," I interrupted myself.

"Then"—resuming the story—"Mike said: 'Are you taking your wife with you?'"

"'No,' says Pat, 'I'm going on a pleasure trip!'"

I GOT another big laugh out of the old wheeze, but I could see that Mary was burning up.

"But here's the funny part," I said. "Watch the forks fly apart for the climax." But Mary refused to turn her head, and I could see a tear forming in the corner of her eye—a tear of anger, it was.

"Look at this now," I insisted, and caught her by the arm, trying to pull her around.

"Don't do that!" she snapped, and with a shove she threw off my hand. I touched her again, and she swung around, irritated aplenty.

"Don't let me see that foolish thing again. Stop it, I tell you."

With a sweep of her hand she struck my pyramid of forks, ready to be sprung apart for the climax of the story. It was all accidental, and poor Mary couldn't help it, but one of the flying forks struck me just below the eye, the prongs making a cut below my cheek-bone. I left the table.

A dab of blood had appeared where the prongs of the fork hit me, and I had started to get this off when I heard Mary crying. A sudden sense of remorse came over me—a feeling of unworthiness that I simply can't explain; and I went back to the dining-room, took Mary in my arms and held her there until Bobby wanted to cut in. Mary didn't kick, either. She kept on crying.

While all this was going on, we forgot about the little cut on my face. You would have forgot it, too, if you had seen the way Mary looked at me when she found that she had hurt me, even though it was an accident. Suddenly she remembered, and, running to the telephone, asked the drug-store to send some peroxide, or something like that. But we had waited too long, I reckon. It took some time to get that cut healed, and when it did respond to treatment there was left the old scar on my cheek that causes so many boobs to ask questions.

"Never you mind," Mary said to me when I first realized and bemoaned the fact that the scar would stick with me for life. "That scar will always be to us a badge of understanding. Any time we start to quarrel, a look at it will stop us. Besides, it doesn't make you look a bit less handsome to me."

And, fellows, Mary had that right. We haven't quarreled since. One reason is that I have never put up another alibi for her to shoot at.

So, when you young men get marriage notions in your head, I want you to take a look at that scar on old McCormick's face and remember:

Any time you start alibi-ing or trying to run your wife's social and domestic affairs, you are getting mighty close to the wrong end of the fuse. Their batting average is 1,000.



Little Sister



By Ida M. Evans

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT A. GRAEF

AS she sauntered out the door of the power-machine-room of the Elite Wholesale Millinery House, her small arms filled with stitched straw-strips for Madame Coralie of the designing-room, Rosy Bolly, errand-girl-in-chief for that busy, prosperous establishment, found it hard to suppress a grin—a derisive grin, that made her small, homely snub nose and round, pert hazel eyes even more impudent than nature had intended. And there was a derisively mirthful twitch to her small, shabby shoulders as she looked back over the left one at one of the machine-operators, a small, gentle-faced girl with prim light-blue eyes, who was stitching away as glumly as though the Milan strips under the fast needle and darting shuttles were designed for a somber hood for one Charon instead of a placque for an Iowa farmer's wife.

Lucy Qualey was Rosy's friend—in fact, her best friend of her own sex. But friendship could not enable matter-of-fact Rosy to see much reason for that glumness. So silly! Lucy was the queerest girl, anyway—such a mixture of primness and silliness. Not for any reward this world could offer would she touch a hot curling-iron to her soft, pale hair; yet there she was, cast deep down in doldrums, merely because her last summer's hat, sent to be redyed, had returned an ugly gaudy blue instead of the delicate *ciel* which she had expected.

Well, Rosy could have told her (had not friendship and courtesy forbidden) that it didn't make a particle of difference, considering Lucy's unfortunately too-white eyebrows and lashes. And the chances were that Carl Cook, anyway, didn't know one blue from another! And why need Lucy be so silly as to care even if he did? Carl Cook was an aquiline-featured, gentlemanly youth who attended the North Side church to which Lucy and her parents belonged. He was rather superior, Lucy had more than once gently stated, to the general run of young men—a statement that her friend Rosy received in bored silence; but it had more than once moved her to reflect that sometimes she was glad that Benny Hinks was merely an ordinary, somewhat ungainly errand-boy.

Benny had his faults. He was rather stupid. He was undeniably homely. His sallow, peaked face was nothing to dream ecstatically over, even though you had no very great opinion of your own snub nose and tow hair. But such as he was, he was Rosy's own property. The whole wholesale-house amusedly knew it. Benny unequivocally acknowledged it. And as she sauntered down the corridor,—airily regardless of the fact that Madame Coralie was tapping an impatient French suede toe while she awaited those stitched straw-strips,—her derisive grin took on a decided tinge of complacency. Lucy might worry about Carl, but Rosy in her small, carefree

heart was cocksure that though Europe might rock with war, Mexico might writhe in rebellion or the Great Lakes dry up, still Benny Hinks would lay down his long, lank, pathetic neck for her to step on, at her convenience, as long as life should last.

Since it was put so entirely at her convenience, it was perhaps inevitable that Rosy should sometimes regard it as decidedly inferior stepping-ground and secretly hold that it was rather a condescension on her part, snub-nosed and tow-haired though she might be, to walk amiably upon it.

So to-day, meeting him, she said snubbily, in tone of reproof: "I'm in a hurry. Madame Coralie wants these straw-strips right away!" When Benny would have loitered for a few moments of conversational recreation, regardless of the fact in an office beyond, Hagill, the manager, was tapping an irritable broad toe while he awaited the carbon-copy of an order dangling from Benny's lank left hand.

And Rosy changed her saunter to an important trot.

"Gee! She keeps you on the run!" said Benny indignantly. "It's a darn shame!"

"Aint it!" sighed Rosy, slowing. "I ought to have a girl to help me." She sighed wistfully.

"Sure you had!" declared Benny. "And some time when Hagill's in a good humor, I'm going to speak to him about it! First thing you know, your health'll be gone."

BUT Rosy did not hear him. Wide-eyed, she was staring after two girls sauntering into the coat-room at the end of the corridor. They had! There was no doubt about it. Cella Rorse—a blue-bell-eyed apprentice in the French-room—and Carrie Bietz—a stock-girl—had painted their cheeks! Red! Scandalously red! As if they weren't enough talked about already in the wholesale-house on account of their sleazy silk stockings and waists cut far lower than their pitifully skinny young chests justified or pardoned!

"Wont Madame Coralie send them scooting to scrub that rouge off!" cried

Rosy. "She just stormed once when Cella blacked her eyebrows." And without further delay she scooted to the designing-room, anxious to be right on the spot when such scrubbing was ordered.

But she entered the room rather guiltily. Owing to her meeting of Lucy, Benny, Cella, Carrie and other persons coming and going, twenty unnecessary minutes had elapsed since she was ordered in a hurry for those stitched straw-strips.

However, Rosy received none of the expected reprimand. Madame Coralie was putting up the receiver, and was pre-occupied as she turned from the telephone. Her brown eyes—handsome brown eyes—were abstracted as she told Rosy that the next day a new errand-girl would be there to help her. Her name was Alta Abbott. She was fifteen years old, and had never been in Chicago before. She came from Jawntown, Wisconsin. Rosy must look after her and coach her.

Rosy's lips tightened—not with enthusiasm. In her life there were many duties that she loathed, but coaching new errand-girls was the worst.

"Why do her parents let her come here?" she asked with disapproval.

"They've sold their farm and all moved here," explained Madame Coralie. She added absently that years before, she herself had gone to school with Alta's sister, Laura Abbott—and then told Rosy to hustle for more straw-strips.

Going for them, Rosy took time to comment disgustedly to Lucy:

"I s'pose she'll go round with her mouth and eyes wide open, looking at the sights, and she'll make all kind of mistakes and I'll get the blame!"

Lucy decidedly agreed that Chicago was no place for a small girl from a small town in Wisconsin.

"I should think"—primly—"that her folks might have managed to stay there. They might be awful sorry, some time, that they brought their daughter here when she was only fifteen years old." Lucy's view of life was still glumly tintured by the too-blue hat.

"Well, I do hope she isn't one of the crying kind," grumbled Rosy. "I s'pose"



Benny Hanks happened in and found the bolt for her. "It's a wonder," he was saying indignantly, "that some one wouldn't tell you it had been moved!"

a superior conscientious streak that irritated one. It was one of the drawbacks to Rosy's friendship with her.

ROSY'S bark, however, nearly always proved worse than her bite.

And at first she honestly tried to be kind to Alta Abbott, who proved to be a small, plump girl with bright black hair and very bright blue eyes—eyes which at once busily and systematically inspected the entire interior of the Elite. Rosy was glad to note, however, that they did not suggest any tendency to frequent tears. They were too composed. Rosy introduced her around—to Lucy, Benny, Carrie, Cella and others. And she carefully taught her the location of the most needed articles in the stock-room. Also, as an extra favor, she very kindly empowered the small newcomer to call upon Benny Hinks should advice or assistance be needed when Rosy

—resignedly—"we'll have to let her eat lunch in here with us."

"Oh, well, we oughtn't to mind that," primly rebuked Lucy, who was apt quite often to display

herself was not at hand to give it.

"That tall, stupid, homely boy?" inquired Alta doubtfully.

Rosy looked at her. "Yes—him,"—rather stiffly. "He may be homely, but he's awfully obliging to new people."

Alta listened docilely.

And docilely she brought her lunch, when bidden, into the secluded corner of the power-machine-room where Rosy and Lucy enjoyed theirs. It was a dainty lunch: thin, delicate sandwiches wrapped in white oiled paper, a tomato packed artistically with lettuce salad, a pink apple and a soft wedge of angel-food cake. Alta, too, ate daintily. Somehow, though she said not a word, Rosy, at least,—if Lucy perhaps didn't,—felt slightly uncomfortable over the less neat arrangement of her own luncheon. She flushed a bit as she detected the newcomer glancing furtively at her newspaper wrapping. The Bolly home had not been able to produce white paper that morning. She felt moved to say pleasantly: "After you've worked a year or two, Alta, you wont spend so much time dolling your lunch up, either!"

"My sister Laura fixed it," said Alta gently—so gently that Lucy gave Rosy a reproachful glance. Why be impolite?

To break the silence, more than for any other reason, Rosy kindly warned Alta that she must be careful going around the loop—at the edge of which the Elite was located. There were so many automobiles. She might get run over, not being used to them.

Daintily Alta Abbott finished a bit of white chicken-meat before she spoke. Then she said gently that her father's farm had been crossed by the main automobile road between Chicago and Milwaukee. Had either of them ever seen that road on a pleasant summer Sunday?

No, they hadn't. Rosy had been out of Chicago only once in her life—a Fourth spent at Peoria with her grandfather. Lucy had never been farther than Gary.

"That road's terrible thick with cars," said Alta quietly, "—as thick as our creek with minnows after the commissioners stocked it."

Though it was modest and courteous, Alta's manner conveyed two things: that perhaps Rosy and Lucy had lived restrictedly; and that it was hardly possible that Chicago's whizzing motors could produce such danger to life and limb as those met in busy Wisconsin.

The kindly smile faded from Rosy's round face. She looked hard at Alta, who was gently nibbling cake.

"Most everyone in Jawntown owns a car," added Alta very courteously. Then she glanced brightly from one to the other.

"Do your folks own any?" she asked.

Rosy was an only child, but her father, a discouraged, aging man, was merely an underpaid clerk in a small, unprosperous grocery store, and he had no other source of income. Lucy's father was younger, but his salary as an "L" guard hardly sufficed for a family of five, and Lucy had had that old hat re-dyed because her mother simply could not let her keep enough of her own wages for a new one.

So at this query they looked peculiarly at each other.

"No," said Rosy stiffly.

"Why, no!" said Lucy wonderingly.

"Neither do mine," said Alta regretfully, "—not yet."

Very gently voiced was that regret. You had to be excessively imaginative to say with conviction that Alta's manner was tinged with patronage. But—

Rosy had an irritable conviction that her kindly warning had fallen on contemptuous ground. Neither she nor Lucy knew how to follow the conversation in its present channel, nor how to direct it to a new one. Alta did not seem quite so docile as a newcomer—and one from a way-back country spot!—ought properly to be.

It was a relief when the gong sounded. Rosy had to sort and card small buckles that afternoon, and she did not see Alta again till the next day. Then, meeting her near a corner window, she said carelessly: "Down that side street is Chicago's public library. It's an elegant

building, all mosaic inside. Some noon I'll take you over to see it."

Alta looked down the street indicated. And then Alta said, gently but rather boredly: "We've got an elegant library building back in Jawntown. I dare say it isn't quite as large as yours—but it's awfully artistic!"

"Oh, maybe it's bigger too," said Rosy cuttingly.

It seemed that Alta was hard to cut.

"O-oh, I hardly think so," she drawled doubtfully, "—though of course I haven't seen the one here yet!"

It was seldom that Rosy Bolly was at a loss for a suitable retort. But this time she was at an absolute loss! She stared at the small, plump, composed girl from Jawntown—then stalked silently away.

A WEEK later, and Rosy—and others—had learned that in many other items, Jawntown, Wisconsin, was superior to Chicago. Its water was purer, for one thing. Well, they accepted that amiably. Its air was cleaner. They accepted that without resentment. Such was to be expected. But also its water-system was better, its streets straighter, its town fountain something to tell about with pride to one's descendants; its merchants were more obliging and intelligent; its atmosphere was choicer; its town hall was architecturally perfect; its jail was more cleanly; its one weekly newspaper was better literature, not to say newsier, than any mere Chicago daily! Its sewerage system was more sanitary. And—

"My gracious! If a Jawntown girl dressed like some Chicago girls, she'd be sent to a reform school that minute!" declared Alta, one outraged eye on Cella Rorse's skinny thirty-nine-cent-fawn-silk young legs, which a short skirt failed to conceal—the other on Carrie Bietz' flat but glaringly powdered young chest, generously exposed by a low V-cut waist of sheer cheap pink Jap silk.

Now, neither Rosy nor her friend Lucy cared greatly for the way these two immature, frail, vain, poorly nourished specimens of the loop-toilers tribe arrayed themselves. Often the two had spoken disdainfully of mothers who per-

mitted daughters such license. Rosy's mother had stricter ideas, also a stricter hold of her daughter's individuality. So had Lucy's mother. Rosy and Lucy wore black, sensible stockings; their small blouses came neat and high to neck. Their sleeves were sensibly long. They would never have dared to pour cheap toilet-water over themselves. But both regarded Alta hostilely. What right had she to saunter down from far-off Wisconsin and disparage folks that she didn't hardly know?

"Oh, I guess Cella and Carrie are all right," said Lucy stiffly.

"I guess they're just as good as lots of girls in Jawntown," declared Rosy heatedly. "Cella Rorse lives right in my neighborhood, and she may dress loud, but she goes home every night and works till ten o'clock; does the housework 'cause her mother's sickly! And Carrie Bietz is home 'most every night, or her father knows why!"

Alta merely shrugged her plump shoulders. "I was just saying what would be done with 'em—in *Jawntown*!" She added, biting into a pink apple: "Of course, folks are more particular in *Jawntown*!"

ROSY told Benny that she was heartily sick of hearing about Jawntown! And then she was dumfounded.

"Are you?" asked Benny in surprise. "Why, I sort of got an idea that it was a real nice place! It sounds nice—the way she talks about it!"

Rosy stared at him! Usually Benny agreed with her, even before he knew what she was talking about!

"I bet there's a lot of difference between this big, ugly old burg and a nice little country town," he went on reflectively.

"Did you ever see one?" sarcastically asked Rosy, knowing quite well that South Chicago marked his longest journeying. "I have! The time we went to Peoria. They're the ugliest, straggliest, clutteriest places, laying alongside railroad tracks, with bony chickens running loose, and hardly any sidewalks, except loose boards—"

"I'm sure I'd like to live in one," repeated Benny thoughtfully, his pale,

lusterless brown eyes fixed in a far-away stare. "I'd like to go fishing in a creek where there's lots of minnows and eels! And I'd give 'most anything to walk through fields and fields and fields—green, straggling fields," he added wistfully. "And Alta says Jawntown has a good ball-team, but they can often use another fellow. Her brother was in it."

Rosy caught the intimate use of the newcomer's first name.

"I'd never live in a country place," she declared coldly.

Benny's eyes remained fixed in the far-away stare. "Oh, I suppose you wouldn't,"—carelessly. "Different people have different tastes. But I'll like it—if ever I can get there. I bet some day,"—determinedly,—“that I own a shack of a house and a few acres, and a hen-coop and some pups and hickory-nut trees!" He actually licked his lean, wide lips at the prospect.

Into Rosy Bolly's round hazel eyes came an indescribable expression. She continued to stare at Benny—hitherto branded her property, hitherto one whose desires ran meekly with hers!

It is one thing to accept carelessly the whole heart of a homely, humble fellow, at the same time planning various excellent careers for yourself which have no need of that heart—such as Madame Coralie's chair, or the managership of the trimmed-hat section, at present held down by a radiant blonde woman whose pearl earrings were reputed real. It is a horse of quite another color to find that humble, homely boy planning a life in which *you* do not seem to figure prominently!

Rosy felt a sudden fierce dislike of Alta Abbott. Her small snub nose curled.

"Well,"—loftily,—“such a life wouldn't suit me! Not when talented folks in the millinery business, like Madame Coralie, are getting thousands of dollars a year, besides two trips, and sometimes three, to Paris!"

"Different folks have different tastes," repeated Benny amiably.

"Madame Coralie has said twice that I might have talent too," stated Rosy crushingly.

"I shouldn't wonder,"—carelessly.

At that unheard-of carelessness of tone from Benny Hanks, Rosy gasped! Then she flounced away. Benny whistled off to the office.

It is possible—taking a charitable view—that an hour later Rosy forgot to tell Alta that the maroon velvet had been moved from the bottom to the top shelf of the stock-room. Nor did Carrie Bietz feel it incumbent on her to supply the forgotten information. Carrie had heard some of Alta's scathing criticisms of herself and of Celia, her chum.

For half an hour Alta searched. Carrie did not always keep all the stock-room shelves free from dust. Alta covered herself and her pretty white middy blouse with grime. Then Benny Hinks happened in and found the bolt for her.

"It's a wonder," he was saying indignantly when Rosy arrived on the scene, "that some one wouldn't tell you it had been moved!" He too had acquired considerable grime and would have to wash his face and hands before venturing into Hagill's sight.

Alta giggled when he had gone away.

"But there's something real nice about him in spite of his queer face and awful clothes," she remarked pleasantly.

Carrie giggled too, and shot a mirthful glance at Rosy, whose sharp little tongue had often darted at her.

ROSY'S round cheeks burned. She was furious. What right had Alta to laugh at Benny—after he was good enough to help her? He could not help his clothes, which were mostly cut-downs from the cast-offs of a paternal uncle who ran a delicatessen store. These cast-offs were usually streaked with bacon-grease, spotted with lemon-cream-pie drippings and redolent of lard and catsup, before Benny got them. And although Benny's hard-working widowed mother cleaned them and cut them down as well as she knew how, the result of her labors left a great deal to be desired.

But you couldn't explain all this to Alta Abbott, giggling so patronizingly. And anyway why should anyone explain it? Let Benny be giggled at—since he liked some folks so well that he wanted

to go live in their towns! At the moment, Rosy furiously could not tell whether she disliked Alta or Benny the more.

Anyway, she had other interests in life. Since Alta was here to run errands, she—Rosy—need no longer put off asking Madame Coralie to initiate her into the glamorous mysteries of hat-making—a far more important matter than anything connected with Benny Hinks. With dignity Rosy stalked away to get stitched Leghorn strips for Madame Coralie and incidentally to relieve her feelings by an outburst to Lucy.

BUT Rosy's feelings were not relieved.

Occasionally Lucy could display a spirit too malicious for genuine friendship. Now her white eyelashes fluttered up amusedly. "Celia and I were laughing," she observed, "just this noon about the way Benny and all the other boys flock after her! I don't blame you for being jealous."

"I aint jealous!" sputtered Rosy. "I never thought of such a thing!"

Lucy merely smiled and adjusted a taffeta strip under the needle. Furious, Rosy grabbed up the Leghorn strips and stalked back to the designing-room.

There she made the long-cherished request. Madame Coralie's handsome face was flushed with the rush of her work. Her handsome forehead was puckered. "Goodness, no, Rosy! I need you to run errands. Besides, Alta is going to act as model for the misses' hats instead of errands. And I promised her sister Laura to let the child learn to make hats as soon as possible."

All fury left Rosy Bolly. But in its place came heartbreak. With agonized hazel eyes she gazed at Madame Coralie, who was too absorbed with a chiffon puff to notice her. Alta was welcome to Benny Hinks—since he was so officiously willing to be taken by her. But Rosy's one chance at a career!

She turned and left the designing-room. Furtively, all her usual aplomb gone, she gained the farthest, darkest corner of the coat-room—and there, for the first time since she was small enough to cry over a smashed finger, Rosy Bolly wept salty, bitter tears.

IN the following weeks the joy of life did not return to Rosy—even interest in life did not return. She performed her duties mechanically. She had nothing to say when one morning Lucy primly stormed because the evening before, when Carl Cook was there at closing time to meet her, Alta had blithely approached for an introduction and then airily asked Carl to come over to her house some evening!

"Just 'cause she thinks he is related to some Cooks in Jawntown who are related to her father!" whimpered Lucy. "That girl will do anything she feels like doing!"

Somberly Rosy listened, but she made no comment. Nor did she make any when one day Benny Hinks took a bandaged hand to Alta for sympathy and a tightening of the bandage. Cutting bread for breakfast while his mother stirred the oatmeal, he had let the knife slip. Briskly Alta tightened it and advised him to be more careful.

Alta permeated the place. Madame Coralie candidly admired her. Cella and Carrie said that they didn't—but they got middy blouses like hers, and invited her to eat lunch with them in a corner of the stock-room.

"And I'm glad she does," primly commented Lucy—with very acrid primness.

Rosy glumly said nothing. What was there to say? What in life was worth saying?

It is entirely possible that Rosy's disposition and peace of mind would have deteriorated permanently had she not chanced to be in the way one Saturday afternoon, at nearly closing time, when Laura Abbott finished a day's shopping by dropping into the wholesale-house to ride home with her little sister, and incidentally chat a few minutes with her former school friend, Madame Coralie.

Laura Abbott was twenty-nine years old. She was a tired, oldish-looking, nearsighted girl who had taught a country school near Jawntown for twelve years under the somewhat crotchety supervision of a rural board. Her worried, close-set, light-blue eyes and pathetically neat hair and gray alpaca dress indelibly marked her as one of a type that runs true in small town or

big; to it belong the women who instinctively take the seeds out before swallowing Concord grapes, who wear flannelette nightgowns whenever the thermometer drops below sixty, who are addicted to cotton in their ears and who say their prayers regularly because an omission might attract a tornado before dawn.

Meeting the little snub-nosed girl in the passage, she asked where her little sister Alta might be found. Rosy, glumly bearing an armful of *coq* feathers back to the stock-room, raised soft, cold eyes; then, without wasting unnecessary words, she jerked her small tow head in the direction of the designing-room.

Taken by herself, Rosy was a small creature; and her obvious glumness was detected at once by the conscientious school-teacher whose business it had been for many years to deal out admonition, sympathy and fractions to young creatures of more or less glumness. Moreover, Laura believed in scattering seeds of kindness. For twelve years it had been duty and daily work to speak kindly or rebukingly to any boy or girl whom she happened to encounter. So now it did not seem quite right not to say more words to this glum little person than strict courtesy required.

"I dare say you know Alta!"—brightly.

Out of the corner of one round, glum hazel eye, Rosy looked coldly up at Alta's sister. "Yes'm," she answered briefly.

"Ah! And how is Alta getting along here?"

Rosy had been about to proceed on her way, having no desire for intercourse, courteous or otherwise, with any of the Abbott family. But this query halted her. Glumly she regarded Laura.

"Tell me," pursued Laura confidentially.

"Oh,"—with hesitation,—"*she's* getting along all right." It was sulky hesitation. Let Alta's sister go and ask some one else! Rosy had no notion of singing praises.

Laura caught the hesitation. She wondered—a bit anxiously. She felt that she must probe farther.

"I suppose there are lots of nice little

girls working down here," she remarked, as a wedge to further acquaintance with this one. She smiled pleasantly at Rosy.

"Nice girls?" repeated Rosy, puzzled, desiring to get away, yet held by Laura's smile. "Why, there's all kinds, just like there is every place!"

Laura's smile lessened. "What do you mean by all kinds?" she asked quickly, impelled by instinctive and acquired distrust. Not

ish eyebrows could hardly be distinguished against her pale, narrow forehead. But now, drawing quickly together, they seemed to stand out like white bristles.

"What kinds?" she insisted.

Rosy suddenly looked up cannily. She knew that tone. Her mother often used

it. Her mother had used it that morning in a tense "Rosy, did you dare to leave off your flannel petticoat a cold day like yesterday?" Rosy's father could use it—as on the evening before, when he declared: "Daughter, don't ever let me see you with your hair plastered down on your cheeks like some girls I meet in the street! I'll smack you!"

So Rosy knew just what that tone signified—deep, instinctive, worry, alarm, apprehension or some other one of the many emotions with which parents and other near relatives dearly enjoy harrowing themselves. She suddenly hung her head. It is the attitude of guilt—or confusion. With small, square calf-skin toe she began to trace a small circle on the floor—around and around and around went that toe.

Laura's light eyes dilated with suspicion. Many a time—aye, hundreds of times—in the red schoolhouse, small toes had scraped around and around and around a knot-hole while she tensely waited for coming confession. Many a time, countless times, had Laura Abbott seen eyelashes flutter up and down, flutter *crazenly* up and down; thousands of times had she watched a small mouth quiver, while she waited.

for nothing has our yellow press cast its vivid illumination over every Main Street and village reading-room.

"Why—why—just all kinds," said Rosy uncertainly, knowing no synonyms or better words.

Ordinarily Laura Abbott's thin, whit-

Laura trembled in horror. "Oh my!" she cried.





Just then, Cella and
Carrie appeared.

Donald Gray

"I—well, they didn't send me to a reform school," finally stated Rosy plaintively.

"Reform school!" exclaimed Laura. "Good heavens!"

"Honest, no one ever did!" Rosy's hazel eyes brought credence.

"What did you do?"—sternly.

Rosy's small tow head drooped; her tow lashes drooped; her round shoulders

sagged forward. Humble, apologetic, convicted, *guilty*, she appeared.

"I—I didn't do anything,"—sulkily. "There was *never* any *reason* why *any-one* should ever dream about sending me to a reform school!"

(The best liars in this world know that the best way of insuring that the truth shall not be believed is to tell that truth so firmly and convincingly and *guiltily* that everyone hearing knows right away you are lying! Whatever her talents in other lines, Rosy could tell the truth so deceptively that Cesare Lombroso himself would have sworn she was lying.)

"You can go ask my mother!" defensively cried Rosy. "Just you go ask her!"

Laura knew mothers! "I don't want to ask her,"—coldly. "Tell me right now where to find my little sister!"

"But there's lots of things I don't do," virtuously added Rosy. "I wouldn't do lots of things that Carrie and Cella do!"

"Who are Carrie and Cella?"—hastily.

Rosy's round eyes slanted for the effect, as she softly said: "They're who Alta eats her lunch with!"

Just then Cella and Carrie appeared, as Rosy, having heard their footsteps down the passage, had anticipated. Sharper eyes than Laura's might have seen only the pitiful side of their pert, immature, powdered faces and exposed scrawny necks.

Laura trembled in horror. "Oh my!" she cried. "But the child is no judge of human nature. I told Mother not to let her go to work! And if it hadn't been for Cora Raley—"

Rosy stared. She had never heard Madame Coralie pronounced with so many syllables.

And just then Benny Hinks hove into view, ambling along in leisurely style. At his best, Benny was sprawly-limbed, lean, shambling. But to-day his mouth was hanging open, its custom when Benny's mind was at ease, and work did not press. And when Benny Hinks let his wide mouth hang loosely half-open—even his mother said, "For pity sakes, shut it, Benny!"

Laura clutched Rosy's arm. "Who's he?"

Rosy bashfully clutched the *coq* feathers more tightly to her bosom.

"That's just Ben Hinks,"—in a low, mortified voice.

"He is a terrible-looking boy," murmured Laura excitedly.

Rosy was silent for a moment. Then she hung her head and muttered: "I guess he aint so terrible. Anyway, his mother keeps her breadknives too sharp—"

"What!" gasped Laura. "What did he do? Cut her—his mother!"

"N-no,"—sullenly. "He cut himself. Anyway, his mother scolds him."

"Oh! Oh!" Laura was quite ill. "Tell me this minute where my little sister is.—Alta!" she broke off sharply as that young person tripped into view behind Benny, on whose arm she laid a friendly hand.

"Oh—you, Laura?" smiled Alta. "Find your way-clear up here?"

"Yes,"—tensely. Before Laura could say more, Madame Coralie also appeared—a radiant, handsome, well-garbed vision. As a complete description of this hard-working young woman, formerly from Jawntown, Wisconsin, it may be said merely that the Elite's out-of-town customers devoutly believed that she was born in the heart of Paris, France. Otherwise how could she gown herself so exquisitely? And as evidence of the perfection of her complexion, it may merely be said that even Cella and Carrie believed her cheeks were naturally pink.

But Laura—not having seen rouge so often, Laura could detect it more positively. And her eyes fixed themselves grimly on Madame Coralie's rose-pink cheeks.

"Cora Raley," said Laura, "I'm taking Alta home. And I think you might have told me what kind of a place this is!"

Madame Coralie stared. "What on earth do you mean, Laura?"

Laura looked grimly at the pearls in Madame Coralie's small pink ears. They cost five dollars and ninety-eight cents, and Madame Coralie herself had paid for them. But Laura would not have believed it if she had been told.

"I guess you know what I mean," she retorted scornfully. "Come, Alta."



"Cora Raley," said Laura, "I'm taking Alta home. And I think you might have told me what kind of a place this is!"

"Do you mean I have to quit?" cried Alta in dismay. "I won't! I like to work down here! It's fun!"

"There is a bakery out near our flat if you want to work," said Laura firmly. "Though it isn't really necessary, Alta."

"I won't work in a bakery!" wailed Alta. "I hate bakeries."

"Really, Laura, Alta is doing so nicely," said Madame Coralie, puzzled.

Laura waved a hand at Rosy. "After what she told me—"

"What lies did you tell her, Rosy Bolly?" angrily cried Alta.

"Rosy, what have you been telling?" sternly demanded Madame Coralie.

"Nothing!" cried Rosy defensively. "She asked me if I'd ever been to a reform school, and I told her no!"

"Why, of course Rosy hasn't!" contemptuously cried Madame Coralie. "That's silly!"

Laura Abbott smiled—a narrow, cynical smile.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Madame Coralie. "I guess Jawntown and its people haven't changed since I pulled out fifteen years ago!"

"Perhaps we haven't," snapped Laura. She glanced grimly at Madame Coralie's earrings. "I'm proud to say that in some things we haven't! And I am thankful for it!" — with another scathing glance at the earrings. "Alta, go get the white apron I made for you! And come with me!"

"I won't!" screamed Alta. "I won't! I w-won't!" But she did, as anyone who ever had an elder sister might know she would!

After them, as they went, Madame Coralie stared wrathfully. Her cheeks were decidedly pinker than three minutes back. Her handsome brown eyes snapped. Rosy was a bit frightened.

"I—I didn't mean—" she began.

"Oh, you don't have to tell me!" absently said Madame Coralie. "I knew Laura Abbott twenty years ago."

BENNY had heard some but not all.

He looked regretfully after the wailing Alta. Then he turned brightly to Rosy, as though, since she was left, he could find consolation. "Wanna go to the movies to-night?" he asked.

Rosy's small snub nose turned up resentfully. "No!" She shyly sidled after Madame Coralie. "If you get another errand-girl," she pleaded, "can't I please try making hats awhile?"

"Yes, you may, Rosy."

Rosy turned to the waiting Benny. Her tone was decided. "I can't keep late hours and ever amount to anything. No, I said I didn't care to go!"

Found: A Pearl

A Scotland Yard Story

ILLUSTRATED BY RICHARD CULTER



The man he addressed swerved round.

IN a snarling, twisting heap the three men rolled into the gutter. The half-dozen spectators, who quickly grew into forty or fifty, lifted no finger to help. They seemed, with that curious lack of initiative which so often seizes London crowds, to regard the fight as an abstract spectacle in which it would be impertinence to interfere.

Quex, overmatched and fighting with dynamic energy, wasted no breath in appeals for aid. He jabbed his elbow under one man's jaw and tore away a thumb that was pressing relentlessly on his eyeball. With a quick twist he became for a moment uppermost in the tangle. He had struggled to his knees

before they again pulled him down, and snapping like a wild dog, he felt his teeth meet in one man's hand.

A wolfish ejaculation of pain punctuated the grunts of the struggle, and a kick that would have smashed an ordinary man's ribs caught him in the chest. He went numb and sick, and the vigor of his resistance relaxed. Some one in the crowd gave an involuntary cry as a knife flickered in the dim lamplight. He shut his eyes in helpless anticipation of the blow he could not avert.

"Where is it?" demanded a voice. "It's your last chance—quick."

He opened his eyes and laughed defiantly. "I'll see you burn first," he said with an oath. "You'll swing for this!"

"Here's the police," said a sharp voice from the crowd, and Quex felt the weight that was pressing him to the ground relax. His two assailants had pushed their way through the crowd, and the quick sound of their footsteps was dying away in the distance when a big constable reached the prostrate man.

"What's all this?" he asked.

Quex sat up slowly and tried mechanically to brush the mud from his light coat. Some one picked up his battered silk hat and passed it to him. He accepted the officer's helping hand and rose dizzily to his feet.

By Frank Froest

Former Superintendent of the
Department of Criminal In-
vestigation at Scotland Yard.

and George Dilnot

"It's all right, Constable," he said quietly. "Just a little joke of some friends of mine. They were having a game."

"Game!" It was the shrill voice of a woman in the crowd. "They were going to murder ye. I see a knife. If the p'lice 'adn't come—"

"That's right," interpolated half a dozen other voices.

The constable wheeled swiftly. He had observed the ruffled evening dress under Quex's overcoat, and he was puzzled. He jerked a notebook out of his breast pocket.

"Queer thing, it looks to me," he commented. "If you say it was a lark, I can't do anything. However, I'd better have your name and address—and you and you." He indicated the woman who had spoken and another person. "Now, sir?"

Quex frowned. He stooped forward as though to brush his coat—in reality to hide his hesitation. "All right," he said at last. "John Blake, Hotel Splendid, will find me. Good night, Officer." He strode abruptly away.

But it was not to the Hotel Splendid that he made his way. Once clear of the throng, he hailed a taxi and gave an address at Balham. He let himself in with a latchkey and went up to the sitting-room of the furnished apartments he rented on the second floor. There, in an armchair, he felt himself tenderly.

"A close thing, John, my boy," he said aloud. "I ought to have carried a gun. I didn't think they'd be so close on to me. Never mind—they didn't get it."

He put his fingers casually in his waistcoat pocket, and an epithet sprang from his lips. With furious haste he searched the rest of his pockets.

"Gone!" he swore. "Those blighters have done it."



Quex had taken two paces backwards, and his pistol showed in his hand. He was still smiling. "Well, Mike," he said in a hard, metallic voice, "I've come after you, you see."

His lips compressed in a wicked straight line. Going through to the adjoining bedroom he pulled a suit-case from under the bed and rummaged till he found an automatic pistol. Pressing it open, he slipped in a clip of cartridges and proceeded to change out of his stained evening dress.

John Quex could be an ugly man when he was roused.

GARTON, divisional detective inspector of the Thirteenth Division, was looked upon at Headquarters as a coming man. He had some of the quali-

ties with which the traditional detective is endowed; and more than that, he had a complete understanding of the possibilities and limitations of the machinery of the Criminal Investigation Department.

Being a business man, it was his habit to drop office affairs punctually at six each evening, unless there were special reasons for staying on. Between nine and ten, he would drop in again on the off chance of anything having arisen that needed immediate attention. So it was that he hit with little loss of time on the matter of the pearl.

He had been to the local variety-show, and in an interval strolled casually over to the station,

"Nothing doing my way," he observed to the senior man on duty.

The other shook his head. "Nothing doing, Mr. Garton. Bit of a row down near the Green Dragon." He closed a heavy folio book in which he had been writing, and came over to the counter. "Funny thing, rather. Couple of roughs tried to lay out a man in evening dress—a real roughhouse until the man on the beat turned up. Two of 'em did a bolt, leaving the third on the ground. He told our man it was a joke. All the same, he'd been pretty badly beaten up, and the people in the crowd said they'd tried to knife him." He moved to his desk and took out something which he passed to Garton. "After he'd gone, some one found this on the ground. If it's the real thing, it's worth something; but I guess it's a fake."

The detective examined the object with curiosity, and an alert light leaped into his face.

"Say, Greig, this is a pearl, all right, all right. Send it round to the jeweler's on the corner for me, will you, to make sure. I'd like some one to go and rake out a couple of my men—Hewitt and Blackson will do. Where's the constable who first got on to this?"

"On his beat. I'll have him fetched. You on to something?"

Garton smashed his hand down on the counter. "If I'm any guesser, that pearl is worth something running into thousands. I smell something in this, Greig. I really do."

For a while things began to stir at the police-station. Garton hustled himself and his subordinates with cold enthusiasm. A hurried telephone-call to the Hotel Splendid made certain that no guest named Blake was there, and the local jeweler confirmed the genuineness of the pearl while diffidently hesitating to express a value. Garton had little use for intuitions and deductions while he was "getting organized."

In two hundred police-stations tape-machines ticked out a report and inquiries. Men pored over the files of "informations" for any description of a missing pearl. Persons who had witnessed the fight near the Green Dragon were sought out and gave the usual vague and conflicting description of the men concerned.

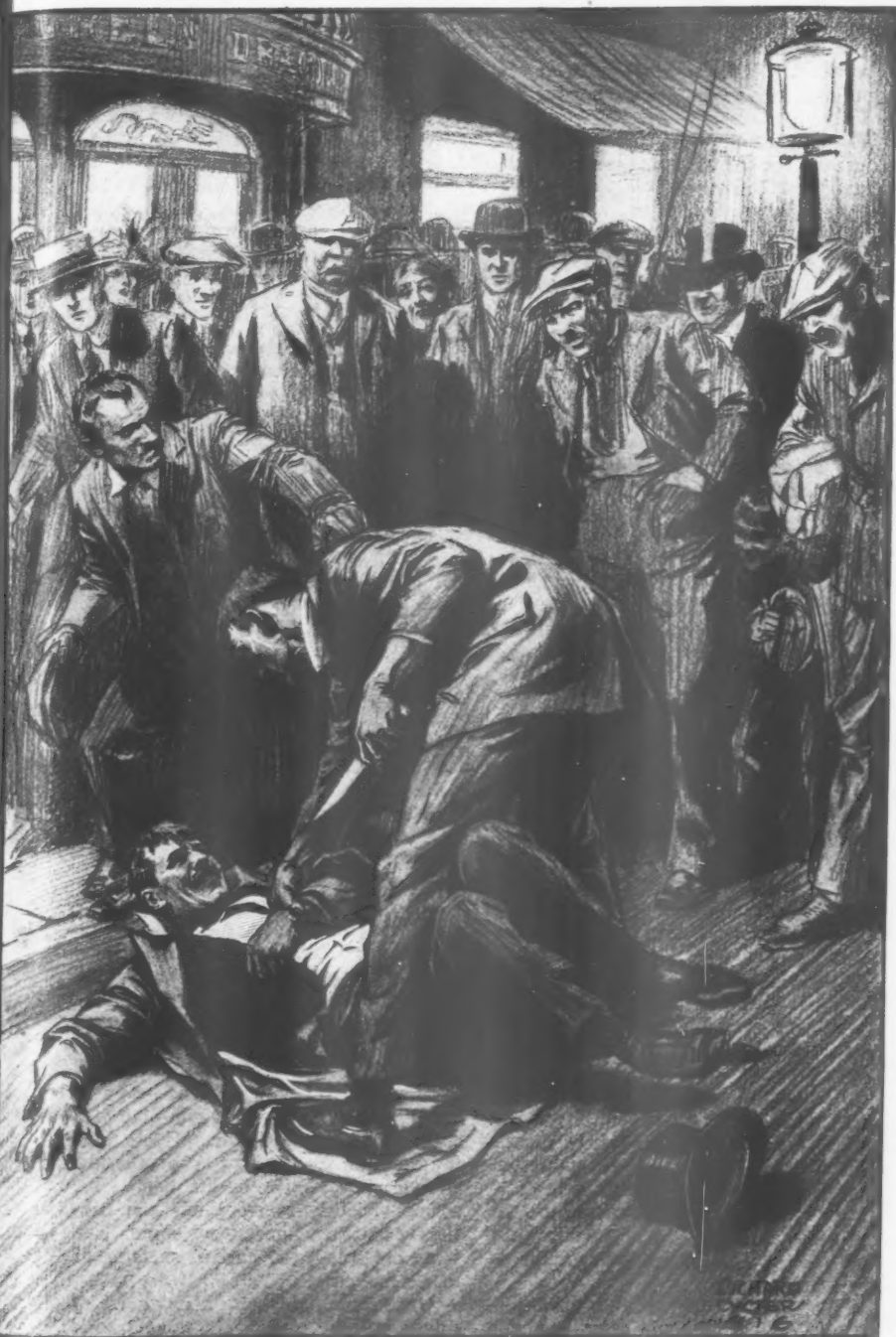
At half an hour before midnight, Hewitt, Garton's right-hand sergeant, stretched his arms above his head and yawned wearily. "It's a dead trail," he observed. "Can't see that we can do anything more to-night, sir. It isn't as if we were sure a robbery had been committed. For all we know, there may be some quite natural explanation of the whole thing."

Garton looked up from the "special release notices" he was studying. "Sure thing, you're getting tired," he said a trifle acidly. "Now, I'm just getting interested. I couldn't rest with this on my mind. I want to know. Let's go take a walk. That'll freshen you up."

Hewitt reached stiffly for his hat and coat. "I'm no slacker, sir," he retorted. "All the same I'd like to know what we are looking for."

"Why," said Garton with simplicity, "for the man who dropped the pearl, of course."

IT was one thing to hunt John Quex; it was another to be hunted by him. He was barely forty and looked less; yet for the school from which he had been graduated, that was a ripe old age. There were few of his fraternity left. Sudden death in one form or another had cut the majority of them off. Some few had had their lives prolonged by long terms in penitentiaries; some, like Quex, had had the foresight to drop out of



Some one in the crowd gave an involuntary cry as a knife flickered in the dim lamplight. Quex shut his eyes in helpless anticipation of the blow he could not avert. "Where is it?" demanded a voice. "It's your last chance—quick." He opened his eyes and laughed defiantly. "I'll see you burn first," he said with an oath. "You'll swing for this!"

New York. On the whole, the career of a gun-man in New York is not conducive to longevity.

His way led cityward. Suburban passengers on the electric car never dreamed that the neatly dressed man, quietly absorbed in an evening paper, was bound upon a murder quest. Why should they? He had neither the low forehead nor the big jaw of the desperado. A man less likely to make trouble never traveled.

At Blackfriars he changed for the underground, and when at last he emerged at Aldgate Station, both hands were plunged deeply in his overcoat pockets and he walked alertly.

Half a dozen times he twisted in and out of mean streets bordering the Commercial Road, and at last he came to a pause before a shabby three-storied house. It was noticeable that he used his left hand to knock and ring in a peculiar combination. His right hand was still deep in his pocket.

The door swung back creakily, and an unshaven man in jersey and belted trousers peered at the visitor doubtfully for an instant.

"Hello, Dick," said Quex amiably. "It's you, is it? Come along in. There's a little faro school upstairs. Ye know the way?"

Quex waited as the other shut the door. "Seen anything of Big Mike to-night?" he asked.

Dick twisted the stub of an anemic cigarette with his tongue. "Sure. 'E's bin 'ere some time. Come in with Jimmie Alford."

Quex clicked his tongue against his cheek and followed the doorkeeper up to the first floor to a room thick with tobacco smoke. At the top of a long table a squint-eyed man in shirt-sleeves presided at a faro-layout. His eyes flickered momentarily to the newcomer, and he nodded dispassionately. Then he turned a fresh card. No one else was interested enough in the visitor to raise a head.

Quex was smiling as he moved toward the table. He touched a stockily built man who was sitting by the operator on the shoulder.

"Well, Mike," he said in a hard, metallic voice, "I've come after you, you see."

The man he addressed swerved round, fists clenched, and his chair toppled over with a crash. Quex had taken two paces backwards, and his pistol showed in his hand. He was still smiling.

"Didn't expect me, did you?" he went on. "Keep where you are, you lumbering stiff, or I'll bump you off right now. And you, Jimmie Alford, don't you move. I was an easy mark an hour or two ago, wasn't I? I fell for you, didn't I?"

There was something more than consternation in the faces of the two men to whom he spoke. Mike was a picture of surprise. His mouth gaped, and his bleary eyes watched the muzzle of the weapon as though fascinated.

The keeper of the gambling-house recovered his wits first. "Here, that don't go here, Jack," he remonstrated. "Put that gun away. If you've got any difference with these gents, you settle it somewhere else."

"Don't you bat in on this, Soapy," advised Quex sharply. "I'm talking to my old pardners there." His eyes were glowing, though his speech was soft enough. "Now, Mike, what about it?"

Mike made no answer. Like Quex, he had been reared in a school where resource was everything. The why or how of Quex's appearance had little immediate concern for him. The gas, for reasons which every gambling-house-keeper will appreciate, was close to the dealer's hand. Mike's arm scarcely seemed to move, and in an instant the place was in blackness. Almost in the same movement he dropped forward on hands and knees like a runner at a starting-point.

Two vivid splashes of flame split the blackness, and there was a cry from the panic-stricken players. They were used to fists, to heavy-tongued belts—even to knives, on occasion; but gun-play was carrying a dispute too far. Mike leaped toward the flashes like a panther, a wicked sheath-knife in his hand. He struck viciously at emptiness and cautiously flattened himself out again. The tense breathing, the hurried shuffling of men's feet, ceased.

Uncertain whether his adversary might still be waiting in the darkness with weapon poised, Mike lay still, every

muscle tense. Heavy footsteps at last sounded on the stairs, and some one within the room scraped a match. The gas flared up, and Mike rose to his feet. Soapy dropped the match from between his fingers.

"Can you beat that?" he said helplessly. "Can you beat it?"

At the table Alford was leaning forward, his hand pressed to his left shoulder. The groan he had repressed while there was a danger of a recurrence of the firing now broke from his lips.

in the East End to waste words. "So you say," he agreed. "That's why those other blokes ran out. Who's been doing the shooting-up?" His eyes rested on the faro-box. "Anyway, we'll take you along. We'd been wondering where you'd pitched your faro-joint for a long time, Soapy."

THERE are lucky detectives as there are lucky generals: Garton was usually kissed by the imp of fortune in any campaign he undertook. If his luck



He caught her hand as she placed the drinks in front of him. "Phyllis, did you ever have your fortune told?" He traced a line on her palm with his finger. "Now, listen. There's a fair man and a dark man—"

"He got me, Mike," he said. "The dog got me."

They were the only three left in the room. Without the formality of a knock, the door was thrust open. A huge figure seemed to fill the room, and behind loomed the form of a uniformed constable.

Soapy tried to smile ingratiatingly. "It's all right, Mr. O'Reilly," he said with suave huskiness. "There aint nothin' wrong."

O'Reilly had been too long a detective

was analyzed, however,—a matter in which critics never took trouble,—it would usually be found to have a background of brains and work. He had reflected that, whether the men concerned in the affray were honest men or crooks, there might be some significance in the proximity of the Green Dragon. So it was that, with the reluctant Hewitt by his side, he happened into the saloon of that hostelry ten minutes before closing time and leaning on the counter, put the usual question to his aide.

"Mine's a Scotch," said Hewitt.

"Why, here's Phyllis," said Garton. He winked at the girl behind the bar. "How are you, my dear? Do you still love me, or have you trampled on another heart? Let's have two Scotches, Phyllis."

The girl behind the bar giggled. "Go on with you!"

"She gives me the boot," lamented Garton. "Hewitt, my life is ruined." He caught her hand as she placed the drinks in front of him. "Phyllis, did you ever have your fortune told?" He traced a line on her palm with his finger. "Now, listen. There's a fair man and a dark man—"

She tried to wrench her hand away. "Don't be silly," she protested. "It'll be closing time in a minute, and you'll have to go without your drinks."

"Never mind the drinks," persisted the Inspector. "If you don't believe I can read fortunes, I'll prove it to you. Take to-night. At about nine o'clock, there were two men here—or was it three?" He appeared to study the palm intently. "I can't quite make it out. Anyway, one of 'em was a particular pal of yours—a man in the jewelry line." He was no longer watching her hand but her face. She had changed color and suddenly wrenched her hand free.

"It's all nonsense," she declared stiffly. "And anyway, it's closing time."

"All right, Phyllis, we're going," said Garton lightly. He lifted his hat. "Good night, my dear. See you again soon."

Outside, Hewitt shrugged his shoulders grimly. "For a family man, sir, if I may say so, you made the going there," he commented. "I don't quite get the idea."

"I'd hate to be without you, sometimes," said Garton evasively. "Why, Hewitt, didn't you see the ring that girl was wearing? Look here; I'm afraid it's too late after all to push our luck to-night, but bright and early to-morrow morning I want that girl's name, the postmark of all the letters she gets, and the names and addresses on all the letters she sends out. Get me? You can handle it yourself or put young Wren on it if you like, but it's got to be done."

"Very good, sir," said Hewitt formally.

BY what means Garton's instructions were carried out he never knew; nor did he trouble to inquire—it was wiser to take for granted that they were lawful. Anyway, Hewitt had produced from somewhere a list of two letters which had gone out and of one that had been received. The outgoing letters had been addressed, one to "John Quex, Esq., 5 Spanish Grove, Balham," the other to "Mrs. Boswell, 33 Hodson's Lane, Leytonstone."

"Girl's name's Boswell," observed Hewitt. "There was only one letter for her by the first post. I left Wren there to pick up anything else."

"John Quex!" repeated Garton thoughtfully. "Know the name, Hewitt? I don't."

"No sir. There was a play or something with a name like it once."

"If I'm right, he should be a useful man to know more about. In this kind of case, Hewitt, where there's nothing tangible to go on, we can only jump to conclusions and be thankful for any fact they lead us to. We'll have a man down to Spanish Grove, and I'll come along later myself if things seem all right."

There is always a certain amount of routine work that has to be dealt with by a divisional chief of detectives, whatever major investigation he has in hand, and for an hour Garton put the pearl case out of his mind. Though the report of the wounded man found at an East End gambling-house, whose companions told a cock-and-bull story of an accident, came under his official notice, he failed to connect it with the pearl case. What interested him more was a special communication from Headquarters, which read:

The pearl you have sent on for expert examination corresponds to the description of one stolen by a trick from the establishment of a M. Rouget at Amsterdam three weeks ago, of which no report had hitherto been received. It is valued at five thousand pounds. It was sent to a hotel in charge of an assistant, to be viewed by a man calling himself Alfred Rockerbilt, who posed as an American millionaire. The assistant was stunned, gagged and left in

a bedroom while his assailants decamped. Amsterdam authorities believe assistant's story a bogus one and have him under arrest. No descriptions of supposed robbers to hand yet. Have cabled for further particulars.

Garton chuckled softly to himself. "That puts that point in order. I think I can begin to see something like daylight." He poked his head into the adjoining room used by his staff. "Say, one of you boys cut down to the Green Dragon. There's a barmaid there named Boswell. I want her brought up here right away."

It was an unwilling and somewhat frightened girl who presently entered Garton's dingy little office. She looked startled as she beheld in the divisional chief the man who, on the previous evening, she had thought to be a slightly fresh business man. His cold, keen face was stern as he nodded toward a chair.

"Sit down, my girl. You didn't expect to see me again so soon?"

She gingerly took the edge of the chair. Her fingers fluttered nervously. "N-no sir."

"Now, don't get frightened. There's nothing at all to be alarmed about. I just want to ask you one or two questions. You know a gentleman named Mr. Quex, don't you?"

"No sir." Her voice was bolder now, though her eyes avoided his.

"You don't, eh? Then how was it you sent him a letter this morning? Come, my girl, don't play with me."

She shrugged her shoulders a little impudently. Her self-possession was coming back to her. "Very well. If you knew, what did you ask me for?"

"I know a great deal. You'll be wise if you believe me. He gave you that diamond ring you're wearing, didn't he?"

His manner dissipated any vague idea the girl might have formed of defying him. "Yes sir," she agreed.

"I see. Now, how long ago was it that you first met him?"

"About four months. He came into the saloon and—"

"He's told you what he is?"

"Oh, yes. Besides, you know. You said so last night. He's a jewel-merchant,

and he's going to marry me when—in a month or two."

"H'm! Had you arranged to meet him yesterday?"

She shook her head. "No. He's away from home a lot, and he drops in at the Dragon sometimes when he gets back."

"You've got a photograph of him, of course?"

She hesitated. His fingers drummed impatiently on his desk. "I—I'm not sure—that is, I believe I have," she admitted unwillingly.

"Ah, good! Now, Miss Boswell, I'll send some one with you, and you'll let us have it." He crossed over and dropped a hand gently on her shoulder. "And see here: there's no reason for you to worry. If this man's what I think, you've had a narrow escape. That'll do for now."

"So Mr. Quex is a jewel-merchant, eh!" he muttered aloud as she went out. "Well, jewel-merchants may fall in love with pretty barmaids and they may give 'em diamond rings that cost two hundred pounds if they cost a penny, but—"

Twenty minutes later he was surveying with elation the portrait in profile of a handsome man with iron-gray hair and a firm jaw. He carried it triumphantly to the outer office and laid it in front of Hewitt.

"Have I got to send that up to the Criminal Record Office, or can you tell me who it is?"

Hewitt made a prolonged, steady scrutiny of the photograph. His memory had been trained to recall faces. "Why," he said slowly, "it reminds me uncommonly of that chap—it's five years since I saw him, and I forget his right name—Slim Jack, isn't it?"

"If you say so," grinned Garton. "Only the name he's known by in respectable circles nowadays is Mr. John Quex. Now, Hewitt, we've got to get busy. You'll have to go down to the Yard."

Garton wanted not only Quex but his confederates. The methods by which they were to be disclosed involved a certain degree of coöperative work familiar to every detective-bureau in the world, but no special mental brilliance. He sent another man down to Balham to aid in keeping an eye on the main quarry,

and Hewitt boarded a car for Scotland Yard.

There, in the Criminal Record office, was a *dossier* that told all available facts, gained over many years in many quarters of the world, of Quex's activities. It was embellished by full- and side-face photographs and the key-number to his finger-prints. In that record now lay the germ of the investigation, for upon it were based inquiries by word of mouth, by telephone, by letter. It would have been wonderful if among the hundred closely organized detectives of London Quex and his associates had entirely escaped notice.

Then it was that a telephone-call from Hewitt had sent Garton on a flying visit to Brixton Prison, where three prisoners remanded that morning in connection with an East End gambling-house case were due to arrive. Somewhere in the prison he spent two active hours—hours that would have caused John Quex considerable uneasiness if he had known of them.

BUT John Quex, for all his experience, did not know. He was sitting in bed a mile or two away, smoking a cigarette and reading the morning paper. He wasn't sure whether he had killed a man overnight, but he hoped he had.

So he read the paper placidly, his conscience easy, his nerves unwrung. It was midday, and a savory smell of cooking from below heralded breakfast. He slipped languidly out of bed, strolled to the window and raised the blind.

"Blazes!" he muttered viciously.

Yet the casual observer would have noticed nothing to warrant his anger. It was an ordinary suburban street like thousands of other streets in London—that was why Quex had pitched his tent there. A baker's cart was ambling along the roadway, and a maid was cleaning the steps of one of the houses opposite. At an oblique angle to Quex, some distance away across the street, two men were talking. These it was who interested the crook.

He drew back; his brow furrowed, and he hurriedly began to dress. If those two idlers were really detectives,—and he had small doubt of it,—some one

at the gambling-house must—as he would have put it—have "squealed."

As he adjusted his tie, a sound caught his ear—a sound so trivial that at any other time, with senses less alert, he would have failed to hear it. He dropped into a chair, and placing something in his lap, picked up his newspaper.

He raised his eyes in mild astonishment as the door was pushed swiftly open. One hand grasped the thing under the paper.

"Well?" he demanded irritably. "Who are you? What do you mean by bursting in on a man like this?" And then his tone suddenly changed. "Ah, keep off, will you!" The newspaper dropped, and an automatic flew to a level.

Neither Garton nor Sergeant Hewitt were novices in this kind of thing. They knew the type of man with whom they had to deal and wasted no time in parley. They had spread out to either side as they entered, and it was with the recognition that they meant business that Quex's opening bluff had changed to defiance.

Garton stood stock still. The muzzle of the pistol was near enough to him to make sudden death a certainty should the crook's finger compress on the trigger. He was as brave as most men, but he was not foolish. Besides, their tactics had carried Hewitt out of the line of fire.

Quex became aware of the sergeant's rush just half a second too late. He swerved in his chair, and the pistol exploded harmlessly as Hewitt's muscular arms sought his throat. He was borne backwards, and as he fell some one kicked the pistol out of his hand.

Three minutes later he was on his feet again with handcuffs encircling his wrists, and Garton was dusting the knees of his trousers.

"You've got no sense, Jack," complained Hewitt peevishly. "You might have killed some one with that gun of yours."

Quex grinned. Now that it was all over, he was without malice. "You guys would have stood a fat chance if I'd known earlier that you were after me. I'd like to know what I'm pinched for, anyway."

"You will be charged with the at-

tempted murder of a man named Alford," said Garton.

"That all? I hoped I'd croaked one of those ginks."

"Also," went on the Inspector, "there is an application from the Dutch police for your extradition for stealing a pearl."

"No!" Quex's jaw dropped. "I suppose Alford snitched on that too. Did he say that Mike and he have got that pearl laid up?"

Garton's face never changed. "No," he declared. "It wouldn't be likely, would it? But what's the use of all this talk? You know anything you say may be used as evidence against you."

"I reckon I can't do myself much more harm. If that little snipe can uncork, so can I. Listen here."

OVER dinner that night with a colleague of the C. I. D., Garton talked with pardonable triumph. "It's the longest shot I ever pulled off," he confessed. "You should have seen Jack's face when I told him that he had lost the pearl in the rough-and-tumble and that his pals hadn't had it at all.

"Of course it was a bad start, when at first we couldn't tell where the thing had come from. It was simply one of those off-chance ideas that took Hewitt and me to the Green Dragon, where I surmised that one or the other of the men concerned might have been during the evening. When I noticed that the barmaid was wearing a ring that must have been worth a couple of hundred, I began to think things. That the pearl should have been picked up at hand, and that she should have such costly trinkets and that neither of the events should be connected was too much of a coincidence to swallow.

"She was a rather pretty girl, and I played with her a bit on a theory I manufactured for the occasion. It was clear that she had a lover who could afford expensive presents—and I managed to get his name and address.

"From then on, things were like clock-work. In the morning came the news of this Dutch robbery, which put me on safer ground. I dug a photograph out of the girl, and of course recognized Slim Jack. It began to look like a clean-up.

A little inquiry showed that he had been seen about with Big Mike and Jim Alford and that the three of 'em were absent from London when the Amsterdam affair was pulled off.

"Then it seems Mike and Jimmie were collared in a gambling-joint where somebody had shot the little man up. That didn't need a *Sherlock*, did it? It was as plain as paint that there'd been a quarrel over the pearl. The other two knew that Jack was mushy on the barmaid, and they hung about to get a chance at him. They had a rough-and-tumble in the roadway and were interrupted. All of 'em was too anxious to stop and answer questions; and Jack, who spilled the pearl in the gutter somehow, thought the others had it. That was how he came to invite himself to a little shooting-party—see?

"Of course I was onto Mike like a bird. Both he and Alford were sore with Jack, but they were cautious. They didn't tell me very much that I didn't already know, and I wasn't too sure that the Dutch police would be able to send over witnesses to identify them. But I had got an idea.

"When we went to get Jack, we didn't take any chances with the rough stuff. He was ready to eat out of my hand by the time we'd got the handcuffs on. I flashed the extradition charge on him suddenly, and he fell for it. He didn't know that we had the pearl, and he dropped into the error of thinking his pals had talked.

"So he told me how the job was pulled off on the other side and that the three made a get-away in different directions. To avoid risks in case they were suspected, the pearl was mailed to Jack's address. He had some idea of taking it over to the States to get rid of it; the others wanted to sell it here. They didn't trust him too much. Well, it seems he told them that he'd got the thing and he was going to do as he darned well pleased. I suppose they thought that to leave it to him would make their chances of getting a bit, mighty small in the end. That started the whole thing."

"A good case, old man," commented his friend.

"I believe you," said Garton.

ILLUSTRATED
BY REA IRVIN

Too Much Gubb



A new exploit of the famous graduate (in 12 complete lessons)
of the Rising Sun Correspondence School of Detecting.

By Ellis Parker Butler

The Foremost Humorist in America

I SHALL not mention the sum I received from the Inter-oceanic Film Company for the right to reproduce the exploits of my good friend Philo Gubb on the screen. It might make other and less successful writers of detective-tales too jealous. When I received the first letter from the Inter-oceanic Film Company, I was not at all sure that I had a right to sell to anyone the right to show Philo Gubb on the screen, since Philo Gubb was an actual living human being and all I had done was to put some of his adventures on paper. I took the letter and went to see Gubb in his rooms on the second floor of Opera House Block, in Riverbank.

"Gubb," I said, when I had shaken his hand, "how about this? I've written thirty-three of your adventures and they have been printed in a magazine and elsewhere, and these motion-picture people have run across them and want to put you on the screen."

Mr. Gubb stiffened immediately.

"Into no case," he said firmly, "will I pay them a reddish cent of legal tender money for any such manner of purpose!"

"But—" I said, and then hesitated. I don't mind admitting to you—confidentially—that the arrangement under

which I had been writing Mr. Gubb's memoirs (as I may call them) was quite advantageous to me. Gubb, to be quite frank, believes in advertising, and he pays me twenty-five dollars each for every story about him I can write and get printed. I am to get twenty-five dollars from him for this one.

"But, Gubb," I said, "if I can get—"

"Get what you choose to want from somebody otherwise else than me," Mr. Gubb said. "Get what you can. But don't expect me to pay out no more cash money into advertising or otherwise."

"Very well then," I said. "You don't mind if I put you on the films if it doesn't cost you anything?"

"Onto those terms," said Mr. Gubb with a smile, "go as distantly far as you like!"

SO that settled that. I accepted the Inter-oceanic Film Company's offer; immediately—almost the next day, in fact—the film-columns of the newspapers began to contain items regarding the "Philo Gubb" series of photoplays and the remarkable manner in which the Inter-ocean meant to produce them.

One item that struck my eye was to the effect that the first release was to be "The Riverbank Bank Robbery." As I

understand it, a "release" means a permission to exhibit. The item meant that Philo Gubb's adventure in connection with the Riverbank bank robbery was to be the first to be manufactured as a film and the first to be exhibited.

Later, when there was some question about the purchase of the photoplay rights of a second series of Philo Gubb stories, I met the men at the head of the Interoceanic Film Company, and I can say they are some of the finest, most honest men I have ever met. I need not say, therefore, that they had no connection whatever with the rascals of whom I shall now, without further delay, tell you.

I am employed, as a regular thing, by the Riverbank National Bank as teller; Mr. Gurnsey is cashier, and Mr. Pittoms is now our president. Mr. Pittoms is also in the dry-goods business, but on the day of which I am telling he happened to be in the bank and was closeted with Mr. Gurnsey in the cashier's little office. I was standing at the teller's window, and two men entered the bank and came to my window. One was a rather hard-faced man of some forty years; the other was thin of countenance and had a rather foxy expression.

"Are you the cashier?" asked the hard-faced man, putting his face close to the bars of the window.

I said I was not, that I was the teller, that Mr. Gurnsey was the cashier, and that he was having a conference with our president, Mr. Pittoms.

"Fine!" said the hard-faced man, whom I afterwards knew as Mr. Daggett. "Mike, we're in luck. The president is here too. Tell them we'd like to see them."

He handed me a card:

JAMES J. DAGGETT
Director
Interoceanic Film Company

I felt a warmth of surprise.

"Your company is going to do some films from something I wrote, Mr. Daggett," I said rather tremulously.

Mr. Daggett looked at me quickly. He seemed to study me keenly.

"That so?" he said. "You didn't write this Gubb stuff, did you?"

"Yes sir," I said. "I did write it."

He seemed disconcerted for a moment, but he recovered himself quickly.

"Well, what do you know about that, Mike?" he asked, turning to his companion. "This is the guy that wrote the stuff we're going to film! Glad to know you!" he said to me. "This here is Mike—Mike Coolin. He's one of our actors. I'm the guy that bosses things, and I run the camera. Guess you've heard of Jimmy Daggett."

I said I had, although, to tell the truth, I had not; and he seemed pleased.

"I guess everybody has heard of Jimmy Daggett," he said, and then he urged me to carry the card to Mr. Pittoms and Mr. Gurnsey, which I did.

"They are the motion-picture people who are going to do my 'Philo Gubb' stories, Mr. Pittoms," I said with proper pride. "I don't know what they want, however."

"Show them in," said Mr. Pittoms, and I did.

MR. DAGGETT was a most business-like man. He went at his subject instantly.

"I'm Daggett," he said. "This is Mike Coolin, one of my actors, and we've come down here to film this young fellow's 'Philo Gubb' stuff. Our boss said Riverbank, where the things happened, was the place to locate the action, see? So here we are."

I corroborated this.

"Yes, Mr. Pittoms," I said, "I read that in the papers. They are going to give a splendid presentation of the stories and mean to stage them right here. The first one will be 'The Riverbank Bank Robbery.'"

"That's right," said Mr. Daggett. "The young fellow has it exactly right. That's why we came to you first. Now, this is the bank that was robbed in the story."

"The money was all recovered," said Mr. Pittoms hastily.

"Sure!" said Mr. Daggett. "Well, to get down to brass tacks, what we want

is to use this bank in the picture. You'll get a ton of coal—"

"How?" asked Mr. Pittoms.

"Why, we buy it and give it to you," said Mr. Daggett. "We do the picture just like it is in the story." He pulled out a copy of the magazine and handed it to Mr. Pittoms. "The bank robber gets into the bank in a load of coal, see? Just like it is in the story. Coal-man drives along the street, and Mike here climbs into the coal-wagon at an alley corner. Coal-wagon backs up to the bank's coal-hole, and the driver lets down the chute and shoots the coal into the cellar. Mike here slides into the cellar with the coal."

"And Philo Gubb—" I began, but Mr. Pittoms interrupted me.

"And we keep the coal?"

"Sure!" said Mr. Daggett, "and if we don't get a good exposure we try it again; and you get another load of coal free gratis. A few tons of coal don't mean anything to a photoplay company when it wants to get a good film. Maybe you'll get ten tons of coal before we get a good film out of it."

Mr. Pittoms turned to our cashier and smiled.

"Gurnsey," he said, "no reason why we shouldn't get some coal free, is there?"

"No reason at all," said Mr. Gurnsey, and he smiled too. He had an idea something would happen to spoil the first one or two films, I imagine. For a dime a boy would run across the picture at just the wrong moment. I knew he had something in his mind by the way he smiled. Mr. Daggett did not seem to notice this.

SO it was all arranged. Mr. Daggett said they would have to wait for a good light and arrange with the police to get a permit and so on, and he thanked Mr. Pittoms and went out, Mike Coolin following him. Mr. Pittoms and Mr. Gurnsey laughed.

"Free coal!" they said. "Nothing wrong with motion pictures that I can see!"

As soon as the bank closed, I ran up to see Philo Gubb. I burst in upon him full of the enthusiasm that uplifts a

young author when his work is about to be staged for the first time, and I began to tell him of Mr. Daggett and Mr. Coolin; but Mr. Gubb stopped me. He was standing before his mirror, in his hand a can of some black stuff with which he was smearing his face and neck, and on the bed lay the disguise listed in the Rising Sun Detective Bureau's Correspondence School of Detecting's Supply Catalogue as "No. 44—Elderly Negro Preacher, with wig, complete, \$13.75."

"It is not at all doubtless that the words, to which you are giving utterance to, interest you," he said with dignity, "but I am not interested into them in any shape or manner at the present moment of time. You had ought to know that when a detective is proceeding onto a detective case he don't like to be interrupted up."

"Oh! excuse me!" I exclaimed.

"The case I am starting out to investigate into," he went on, "is one of the most interestingest into my experience as a detective."

"What is it?" I asked, and as he continued to smear his face he told me. For some time Mr. J. H. Widdle, one of our leading coal-dealers, had suspected he was losing coal by theft. In large or small quantities—he could not tell which—coal seemed to be disappearing from his yards on Ash Street. These yards were well fenced, and a watchman was always on duty in the yards, but still Mr. Widdle believed coal was being abstracted. It worried him, and he had taken the matter to Riverbank's well-known paper-hanger detective.

Philo Gubb had accepted the offer of two dollars a day promptly, and he was now preparing to solve the mystery of the missing coal.

I guessed immediately that he meant to wear the disguise that lay on the bed. This disguise was one I had seen before. He had used it frequently—so frequently that everyone in Riverbank knew, the moment they saw it on the street, that Philo Gubb was at work on a case. He had worn it in the Tankerville Hound case (about which I will write next month's story) and in the Riverbank Bank case and in many others.

Before he had finished telling me of the mystery on which he was about to employ his talents, Mr. Gubb had completed blacking his face and had begun to don the disguise. I helped him. When he was completely transformed into an Elderly Negro Preacher—although I must say he looked more like an elderly black flamingo—he dismissed me.

"You can descend downstairs and leave me alone by myself now," he said. "Before proceeding to real actual operations, I wish a desire to think out some thoughts onto this coal-case. A deteckative has to do less or more mental brain work onto a complicated-up case before he starts out beginning to commence onto it."

SO I left him.

Whatever the result of his thought and work, I knew he would tell me all about it later, and I had no desire to interfere with his labors. I closed the door behind me, walked down the corridor to the stairs and thence down the stairs to the street. At the bottom of the stairs I stopped short with a gasp of amazement.

"Gubb!" I exclaimed.

Before me, on the walk, stood Philo Gubb just as I had left him a moment before. Blackened face, gray wig, disguise No. 44, Adam's apple and birdlike eyes—it was Philo Gubb! He looked at me a moment, turned his back on me and walked to the edge of the pavement.

"Hey! You!" shouted a harsh voice. "Get away from there! Get away! Get a—"

On either side of the Elderly Negro Preacher, but at some ten feet distance, were massed crowds of interested citizens of Riverbank of all ages and two

sexes. Across the street stood another mass, in a semicircle, and the pivot of the semicircle was a man standing alone on the pavement with a camera of peculiar thin shape on a tripod before him. It was Mr. Daggett. At this moment he had his head raised, and I noticed he was waving his hand at me frantically and shouting at the same time.

"Get back there!" he shouted angrily. "You idiot, don't you know better than to walk into my picture? Get away from there!"

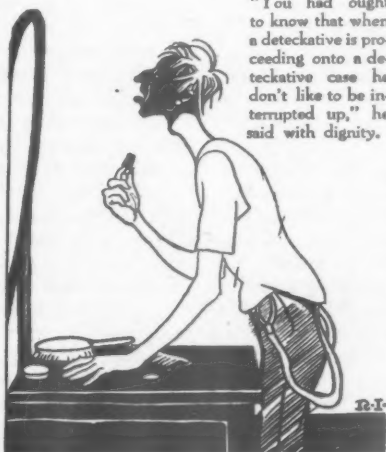
I flushed with shame at my unfortunate position, but before I had taken two steps to get out of the picture some one shouted my name, and Billy Biggs

"You had ought to know that when a deteckative is proceeding onto a deteckative case he don't like to be interrupted up," he said with dignity.

yelled "Author! Author!" Everyone cheered, and Mr. Daggett stepped forward and shook my hand.

"I didn't know it was you," he said in quite a different tone. "I'm gettin' right to work on this reel, you see. Come over here and meet Mr. Brabsy. Aint he a wonder? Aint he the living image of them pictures of Gubb in that magazine? And say, my property man got the very disguise you say

Gubb had on—Number What-was-it, out of that What-you-call-it catalogue. Say, Brabsy, this is the young fellow that wrote this scenario you are doing. All right now! You come over back of the camera, young fellow. Brabsy, you go up them steps a ways and come down walking like a bird—like a rooster walking on eggs, or on hot iron or something. Come out to the middle of the sidewalk and look up and down. Where's that kid I picked out? Oh, there you are! You look up and down, Brabsy, and start down-street at a good clip. Then, you kid, follow him—see? And then you fellows," he said to the crowd on the uptown side, "you follow along across



this bare place, but don't you look at the camera on no account. You look at Gubb. See?"

He glanced around to see that all was correct, and his eye lighted on Brabsy again. Brabsy was tottering a little on his legs.

"You dog!" Daggett snapped at him in a low voice. "You've gone and got half drunk again! You cut it out—understand? If you take another drink before this job is finished and we're out of this town, I'll beat you up so you wont ever forget it. Now get up them stairs!"

It was amazing to me how a mere camera-man dared speak so to an actor as famous as Brabsy.

"Aw, chee!" the imitation Gubb said in anything but a cultured tone. "I didn't take hardly nothin'."

"You get up them stairs!" said Mr. Daggett wickedly, and the man he had introduced as Mr. Brabsy obeyed with amazing alacrity.

From my position at Mr. Daggett's elbow I had my first sight of the making of a motion picture. Mr. Daggett shouted his directions like a man calling home the cows from a far hilltop. I thrilled when I heard the first clicking of the camera as Mr. Daggett turned the crank. Mr. Brabsy walked down the stairs, hesitated, looked up and down.

"Gubb! Walk down the street!" shouted Mr. Daggett. "Boy! Follow him! Crowd—follow boy! Look at Gubb! Look—at—Gubb! *Look—at—Gubb!*"

The clicking of the camera stopped, and Mr. Daggett raised his head.

"All right, Brabsy. That's all to-day," he shouted, and took from his pocket the magazine containing my story. It was evident he did not work from a 'script. The crowd pressed in around us, and the imitation Gubb strolled toward us. "Tomorrow we'll work at the bank," Mr. Daggett said, and shouldered his camera. A few small boys followed him, running at his side or hurrying ahead of him to look back, and the rest of the crowd dispersed. Where Mr. Brabsy went I did not notice. I stood a minute idly, and when I looked up I saw Philo Gubb, in the Elderly Negro Preacher disguise,

step from the doorway as Mr. Brabsy had stepped. He hesitated a moment and looked up and down the street; and then, exactly as Mr. Brabsy had done, he started down the street "at a good clip," as Mr. Daggett had phrased it.

MR. WIDDLE'S coal-yard is on Ash Street and is surrounded by a tall fence, the gate of which is padlocked on the inside every night. The watchman is an elderly negro, Silas Washington by name, who tramps the yard all night—except when he sleeps on duty. To the west of the coal-yard is a junk-yard where Jacob Berkman receives and sorts old iron, old rags and old rubber. The rags are stored and sorted in a shack built against Mr. Widdle's fence.

To the east of the coal-yard is an ancient three-story frame building, once the Riverbank Steamboat Hotel, but now a dilapidated and dirty tenement. Twenty or more families are crowded into the structure, and it may honestly be said that they are the dregs of the riffraff of the town. The coal-yard, except for the lane down its middle, is floored with heavy planks and divided into bins of irregular size, some of which are roofed and some of which are not. Those in which the coal is stored are not; those in which such things as bags of cement and bales of plasterers' hair are stored, are roofed. All these bins back up against the fence on one side of the yard or the other.

Philo Gubb, proceeding from his rooms (or from his one room that served as workshop, bedroom and office), walked toward Ash Street, and when he reached the alley back of the coal-yard he stooped and glided into the alley. Dusk had arrived. When he reached the alley fence of the coal-yard he straightened up, peered over the fence and with an agility not usual in an elderly negro preacher, shinned over the fence and glided into the shadow of one of the large bins where was stored plasterers' hair in bales. Between these bales he crouched down, listening intently. His night's work—conducted in exact accordance with the seventh lesson of the Rising Sun Detective Bureau's Correspondence School of Detecting—had begun.

I was at my teller's window the next day about noon when Mr. Daggett entered the bank. He came to my window and looked in.

"We've got fine light to-day," he said, "and if it's all right, we'll take that coal-chute scene this afternoon. I've got a notion it's going to be a mighty hard stunt to have Coolin slide in with that coal so as to get a good film of him. I want to get right at it while the light is good, because we may have to try it forty-seven times before we get it right. Sometimes we have to do one of these hard stunts over and over. Wonder if it would be convenient for us to pull the stunt along about two-thirty this afternoon?"

Mr. Gurnsey had come to the window.

"Quite convenient," he answered.

"That's fine!" Daggett said. "Now, I wonder if me and Coolin could go down cellar and take a look. I don't want to kill Coolin. I want to show him where he's going to land when he comes through the coal-window on the coal. May have to put a mattress or something for him to light on."

"Just so!" agreed Mr. Gurnsey. He was exceedingly interested in the whole affair. Mr. Daggett stepped to the door and called Mr. Coolin, and Mr. Gurnsey himself went down cellar with them. Our two young bookkeepers fidgeted.

"You can look down the cellar-stairs, if you want to," I said; so they did. Mr. Daggett and Mr. Cooling examined our coal-bin.

"This is all right," said Mr. Daggett. "We don't need anything for Coolin to light on. We'll have the end of the coal-chute come just this far. I'll have Reddy down here. Got a shovel here? Yes. You'll wiggle down the coal-chute with the coal, Mike, and when your feet come inside the window, Reddy'll grab them and pull you. Reddy'll see you don't get a bad fall. With a little bin like this," he said to Mr. Gurnsey, "one ton of coal on top of what you've got here will fill her full up. Soon as she's full, Reddy'll have to shovel the coal out onto the floor here to be ready for another ton if we have to take the picture over."

"There's one thing—" said Gurnsey.

Mr. Daggett turned to him quickly.

"The coal," said Mr. Gurnsey. "We use egg coal. We don't want the cellar filled with pea coal or nut coal when we use egg coal."

Mr. Daggett laughed.

"Say, that's one thing you'd think I didn't know, aint it? Well, I did know it. I ordered the coal down there to Widdle's,—that the name?—and egg is what I ordered. How did I know that?"

"Blest if I know!" said Mr. Gurnsey.

"It was in this young fellow's story," laughed Mr. Daggett. "Him being in the bank and writing a story about the bank, I figured he'd write down the kind of coal the bank uses. Well, I've got ten tons coming, ten tons of egg coal."

"Ten tons!" exclaimed Mr. Gurnsey.

"Ten tons, on ten wagons," said Mr. Daggett. "Preparedness, hey? If we have trouble with the slide down the chute, we can have ten tries without wasting any time."

HARDLY had Mr. Daggett and Mr. Coolin left than Mr. Gubb—the real one this time—entered the bank. He entered with that cautiousness of manner that indicated he was following the rules for shadowing and trailing set forth in Lesson II of the correspondence lessons. He slid inside the door and glided along the wall, stooping slightly, and then ducked suddenly across the floor to my window.

"Hello, Gubb!" I said.

"I aint acquainted with any individual person of that cognomen of name," said Mr. Gubb. "I am 'Rastus Jones, a colored negro man.'"

"All right," I said. "What can I do for you, 'Rastus?'"

Mr. Gubb looked to right and left and whispered.

"I'm Gubb!" he said. "I'm only temporarily disguised up for the moment, like you are aware of the knowledge of, because you saw me don these garments onto me. Hist! Who are them there suspicious individual strangers that was into the bank just recently now?"

"Why?" I asked. A banker should always ask that question.

"I am deteckating a coal-thief at

Widdle's coal repositorium," said Mr. Gubb, perhaps forgetting he had already told me this in his room, "and the detective procedure rules require the demand that every clue ought to be followed up to where it goes to. Them there couple of two men was into the coal-yard quite recently. Whom are they?"

"Gubb," I said, "you are on the wrong clue this time. Those are motion-picture people, and they are going to take motion pictures. They are going to reproduce on the screen, without cost to you, the details of your adventure with the robbers of this bank. They are perfectly all right. They bought that coal. They are going to use it in making the picture."

Gubb's face, although blackened, showed his disappointment. He stood a moment staring at me; then he ducked across to the wall, sidled along it to the door, peered out and glided away in perfect freedom from observation except for fifty or sixty small boys and

older loafers, who uttered a short cheer and followed closely at his heels. Followed by these, he retraced his steps to the coal-yard. Not until he was almost there did he hear one of his retinue say: "He's goin' to be photo-filmed up here, I guess." Then he turned and told the crowd in no uncertain terms that he was not a photoplay actor.

"I wish you would 'tend to your own affairs of business," he said angrily, "and not interfere into mine! I aint no manner of means of actor in any respect of circumstance. I'm a negro African colored man taking a perambulating walk on my own hook."

"It's Gubb!" cried the crowd, and for the first time in history they found no pleasure in dogging his steps. Film-making was a newer and more intense interest, and they hurried away, fearful lest they might miss something. Mr. Gubb waited until they were out of sight; then he slipped in at the frowsy door of the tumbledown tenement that had once been the Riverbank Steamboat

Hotel and was at once lost in the darkness of the narrow, dirty hallway. He stopped short there and listened.

The lower floor of the building, to the west, was occupied by a low grocery, and from this came the noise of voices and glasses. Mr. Gubb drew a bull's-eye lantern from his pocket and threw a light down the hall. At the far end was a door,—the door to the cellar,—and Mr. Gubb opened this cautiously and went down the filthy stairs. At the bottom he stood motionless, listening. Except for the scraping of feet and the dulled rumble of voices that filtered through from the barroom overhead, there was no sound. He advanced into the cellar.

Along the wall toward the coal-yard he let his



The result was entirely unexpected. A trap door fell downward, striking him on the head, and this was followed by a small avalanche of egg coal.

lantern throw its beam, following it himself, and suddenly he stopped short with an exclamation of triumph. Low down in the wall was a hole where the decayed sandstone of the foundation had worn—or been hacked—away, and here was a hole twice the size of a man's largest circumference. The floor of the tunnel thus made was worn hard, and here and there were small bits of coal. The hole led directly under the planking that formed the floor of one of Mr. Widdle's storage bins! Mr. Gubb crawled into the hole on his hands and knees.

AT about this moment Mr. Daggett, his camera tripod in his arms, drew up before the low groggery in an automobile.

"We'll try this one, Reddy," he said to the driver. "If the drunken idiot isn't here, we won't waste any more time on him." And he jumped from the car and entered the groggery. The man he sought was there. Mr. Brabsy, still in the marvelous make-up of Philo Gubb, leaned against the bar.

"S all ri", Daggett," he said. "I'm all ri'. Not 'toxicated 'tall."

Mr. Daggett did not believe him.

"You idiot!" he snarled. "This is a nice way to act! I paid you good money to come to this town and keep people looking at you while we did the job at the bank, and here you are, drunk as a sailor. All right! I can't have anything like you down there at the bank; you're a joke. But listen to this—listen, I tell you: If you don't want to get twenty years in the pen, you be ready to jump into the automobile when we come by here. Understand that? Well, you'd better understand it. I'll give three toots of my horn, and you beat it out and into the automobile when you hear it. And if you drink another drop, I'll mash your head in!"

With this Mr. Daggett departed. For five minutes Mr. Brabsy stood in sullen inertia. Then he went back to the bar.

MR. Gubb crawled on into the hole.

As he proceeded, the hole widened and grew higher until he found himself in a chamber fully a yard high. In this

he could not stand erect, but by putting his hand above his head he could feel the planking that formed the bottom of Mr. Widdle's coal-yard, although it was so blackened with coal-dust as to be indistinguishable even in the light of the lantern. With great care he investigated this planking. At one place a small upright extended from the floor to this plank ceiling, and Mr. Gubb jerked at this gently. The result was entirely unexpected. A trap door fell downward, striking him on the head and rendering him momentarily unconscious, and this was followed by a small avalanche of egg coal. It descended like a miniature Niagara full upon Mr. Gubb's back, flattening him to the floor and covering him with coal. And the only sound he uttered was "Ugh!" Then all was silence. He had found the leak in the coal-yard!

How long he lay there he was never able to say, but there can be no doubt that the removal of ten tons from directly over him was the happy circumstance that permitted him to recover his breath at last. The ten tons were the ten tons that were loaded into ten coal-wagons to take part in the filming of the first Philo Gubb reel, as staged by Mr. Daggett.

When the ten coal-wagons arrived at the side of the bank, Mr. Pittoms, our president, was in the bank; and he and Mr. Gurnsey were giving the final instructions to three small boys, telling them exactly how to run in front of the camera at exactly the moment Mr. Coolin was sliding down the coal-chute. As the wagons rumbled into the street they dismissed the small boys hurriedly. Had Mr. Pittoms and Mr. Gurnsey but known it, this interference with the work of the camera was exactly what Mr. Daggett wanted.

Hardly had the small boys gone, when Mr. Daggett and Mr. Coolin, accompanied by the man named Reddy, entered the bank.

"We're all ready now, if you are, gents," said Mr. Daggett cheerfully. "Will some one show Reddy the way to the cellar?"

Mr. Gurnsey told me to do so, and I did.

The street outside was crowded, everyone being gathered in the side street, on which the bank has no windows. I came up from the cellar, leaving Reddy there, and Mr. Daggett and Mr. Coolin went out. Mr. Gurnsey and Mr. Pittoms went with them. The two young bookkeepers fidgeted.

"You can go out and have a look," I told them. "Nobody will come in here while the motion pictures are being taken."

This was—alas!—too true. I was no sooner alone than I heard Mr. Daggett's voice shouting directions in the street. He did not mince words; he uttered the strongest and hardest ones he knew. I will omit these, but among them were larded such phrases as "Back up that wagon! Get that chute into the window! Mike, get into the wagon. *Get into the wagon!* Now, let your coal flow! *Coal*, I say!"

I heard the noisy gliding of coal down a steel chute. Outside, the scene was one seldom or never seen in Riverbank. The street at the side of the bank was entirely cleared of vehicles except for Mr. Daggett's automobile, which, the motor running, panted at the far curb. The street and the far walk, except the space Mr. Daggett demanded to have kept clear, was crowded with onlookers, and the auxiliary coal-wagons jammed the street at the corner. Alone in the bank, I stood looking toward the door, trying to imagine the scene outside and wishing I was there, when I heard Mr. Daggett shout the direction: "Grab him, Reddy!"

Instantly I felt an arm around my neck. My head was drawn backward with a jerk, and something was jammed into my mouth. I heard the man Mike Coolin run up the cellar stairs. He joined the man named Reddy and helped him bind me hard and fast. It was the work of but a moment, and then Coolin hurried out of the bank. I heard Daggett in the street shout: "All right! Back up that next wagon. We'll try it over."

OUR vault was open. Ten or twelve thousand dollars in cash lay on the sill of my teller's window, and forty odd

thousand dollars in handy form was in the vault. Lying on the floor as I was, I could see Reddy at work. He jerked off his coat, and I saw that the inside was a series of pockets. Into these he crammed the money with hurried hands.

"Mike, get into the wagon!" shouted Daggett outside. "Now, let your coal slide! Mike—*slide!* Thunderation, we've got to do it again—can't you cops keep those boys away?"

I heard the crowd laugh. I could imagine Mr. Gurnsey and Mr. Pittoms were laughing too. I heard Mike Coolin come running up the cellar stairs.

"How is it?" he asked Reddy.

"Easy!" he answered. "Jam this in your pocket; there's more than I can stow. Come on; now for the get-away!"

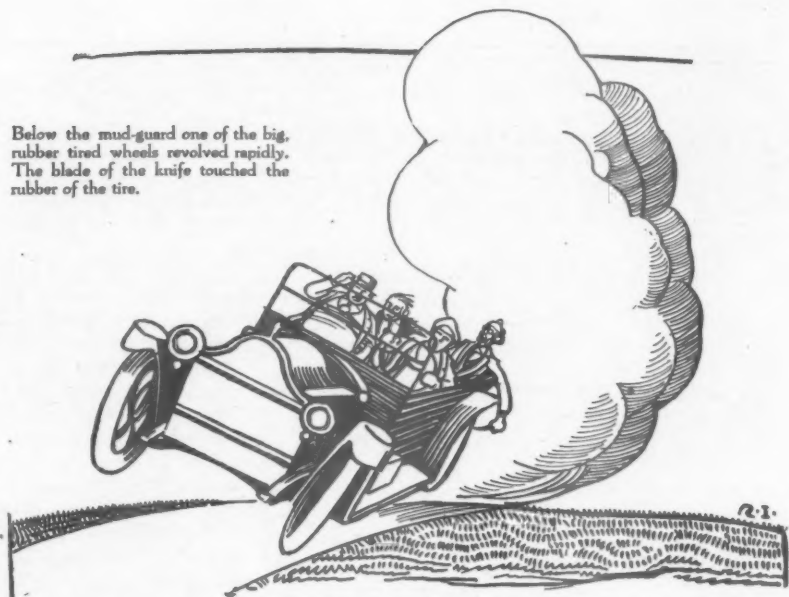
They went out, and in a few moments I heard the explosions of an automobile with the muffler cut out. Mike and Reddy and Daggett were making a clean get-away. It had all been too easy to believe. Mr. Pittoms and Mr. Gurnsey and two young bookkeepers entered the bank.

"He'll take the rest to-morrow," laughed Mr. Gurnsey. "The film got jammed in the camera. Anyway, we got two tons to-day, and if those boys keep on getting in the way, we may get the whole ten tons."

"Easy coal, Gurnsey," said Mr. Pittoms, and so they continued while they walked back to the inner door and entered the enclosure. I need not tell you the change that occurred when they saw me bound and gagged. They wasted time looking in the vault; they wasted time looking to see if the money had been taken from my teller's window-sill; the policemen wasted time trying to get the idea that the bank had been robbed; time was wasted because Ash Street was jammed with loaded and empty coal-wagons. It was an easy get-away—a fast and powerful car with a good start!

AS consciousness returned to him, Philo Gubb tried to raise himself, but the coal held him fast. Little by little he scraped and wiggled and twisted until he was free, and then he painfully groped his way through the short tunnel and into the cellar. He crawled up the

Below the mud-guard one of the big, rubber tired wheels revolved rapidly. The blade of the knife touched the rubber of the tire.



stairs on his hands and knees, and in the same manner made his way along the hall. He toppled down the low step onto the sidewalk and there fell in a limp, exhausted heap, taking deep breaths. From down the street came the roar of the exhaust of a powerful motor-car, and a horn tooted thrice. The big car stopped immediately in front of the wretched tenement, and Mr. Daggett swore softly but whole-heartedly.

"Give me a hand here, Reddy!" he cried. "This cheap hain is so drunk he don't know he's living. Throw him into that back seat with Mike!"

They lifted Philo Gubb and tossed him into the car.

"I—I'm Gubb!" said Philo Gubb faintly.

"Yes, and you're a fine Gubb!" snarled Daggett.

The car sped on. The fresh air seemed to revive Philo Gubb, but his back hurt and his legs ached. He sat with closed eyes, too limp to expostulate with his abductors. Mike Coolin leaned forward and talked about the manner in which the robbery had been done; Reddy and Daggett answered him. Slowly into Philo Gubb's confused brain filtered the knowledge that the Riverbank National

had been robbed and that these were the robbers. Slowly he grasped the fact that chance—the best aid to detectives and Philo Gubb's prime assistant—had tumbled into his lap the opportunity to make the greatest capture of his life. On the other hand, if the robbers discovered who he was, his life might be worth but little. From his left pocket he drew a large pocket-knife, and while Mike Coolin leaned forward, Philo opened the big blade. He let his hand hang over the side of the car. He was ready to defend himself if he was attacked.

The blade of the knife touched the rubber of the tire. There was a long, soft *whew* of exhaling air, the bumping of a deflated tire over the ruts, and Reddy brought the car to a sudden stop. Consequently the police automobile coming from Derlingport in answer to Mr. Gurnsey's frenzied telephone message met Mr. Daggett's car this side of Carson.

When Daggett saw the car approaching he turned to Mike Coolin.

"It's all up!" he said. "They've nabbed us!"

"Consequently hence," said Mr. Gubb, "I arrest you one and all into the name of the law!"

Another Philo Gubb story next month.

THE alluring pitfalls that trap the youth of to-day are shown up under the clear light of understanding in this powerful story, "The Sins of the Children," by Cosmo Hamilton.

Peter Guthrie is the foremost of the "children." He is the son of a New York physician who has been endowed with millions to study disease. Peter becomes an unusual favorite at Oxford. His roommate is Nicholas Kenyon, an elegant member of that class of aristocratic roguery that lives by its wits. Peter is an athlete, boyish and generous. "Nick" is a clever and amusing parasite, the son of a peer of the same type.

"What's this devilish provincialism that hangs to you?" asks Nick one night when Peter refuses to accompany him.

Peter laughs at the other's peevishness—then explains: "The whole thing comes to this, Nick: The girl I marry is going to be clean. I believe in fairness. I'm going to be clean too. That's all there is to it." And Nick gives up trying more persuasion for the time.

Peter is the oldest of four children. The others are a brother, Graham, already a broker in Wall Street; a sister, Belle, a débutante of the year before; and a younger sister, Ethel, still in school. All have been brought up by an indulgent mother, because their father has been so absorbed in his work in providing for them that he has never had time to share their interests.

The Guthries, with Betty Townsend, a friend of Belle's, visit Oxford. Nick, looking to probable gain, makes himself delightfully entertaining to all the members of the party. Belle falls in love with him.

Meanwhile Peter has also been losing his heart. Before the week of festivities ends, he tells Betty Townsend his return to New York will be to begin work for her, and she is as happy as he over their engagement.

NICK immediately scents danger to his plans to live off Peter and tries to interest him in some chorus girls.

His attempt fails, but he does not give up. He takes the young American to the home of his father, Lord Shropshire, where "Baby" Lennox, a mysterious beauty, also of the parasite type, is a guest. Nick tells her he wants Peter saved from marriage with Betty. Mrs. Lennox readily agrees to help. She sees to it that her room is next to his. One night she rushes in upon

him. She pretends to be frightened and throws herself into his arms, whispering that she loves him. Peter is suddenly drunk with the touch of her, when there is a knock on his door, and the woman flees by way of a balcony. When Peter is alone again, she returns. But he is now himself and courteously gets rid of her.

But Nick's influence is not only at work on Peter. In New York, where the Guthries have returned, Graham Guthrie visits a gambling apartment recommended by the English profligate. There a gazelle-eyed dancer pleads with him to save her. Her plan succeeds and Graham takes her away with him. Then, not knowing what to do with her, he establishes her in an apartment.

Shortly after that Peter comes home, bringing Nick for a visit. Nick divides his time between making love to Belle and devising a surer plan to break Peter's engagement to Betty.

A Complete
Résumé
of the
Preceding
Chapters of
"The Sins of
the Children"

A new novel by the author of
"The Blindness of Virtue."

The Sins of The Children



Betty Townsend

By Cosmo Hamilton

CHAPTER XX

ILLUSTRATED BY
GEORGE O. BAKER

THE family dined early that evening. Graham had taken a box at the Maxine Elliott Theater. He and Kenyon and Peter were to take Belle and Betty there to see a play about which everybody was talking. Little Mrs. Guthrie, who was to have been one of the party, had decided to stay at home, because the Doctor was not feeling very well, and she was therefore going to sit with him in the library and see that he went to bed early, and give him a dose of one of those old-fashioned remedies in which she was a great believer.

Naturally enough, although he was not an ardent playgoer, Peter was looking forward with keen pleasure to the evening because he would be able to sit close to Betty and from time to time whisper in her ear. During dinner, however, which was a very merry meal,—Kenyon keeping everyone in fits of laughter,—Peter caught something in his mother's eyes which made him change his plans. The little mother laughed as frequently as the rest of them; to the casual observer she was merry and bright, with nothing on her mind except the slight indisposition of the

Doctor; but Peter's sympathetic and intuitive eye informed him that his mother was only simulating light-heartedness and stood in need of something from him.

He threw his mind back quickly, and in a moment knew what was wrong. During the short time that he had been back in the city he had forgotten to give his little mother anything of himself. That was wrong and ungrateful and extremely selfish, and it must be remedied at once. Without a moment's hesitation he decided to cut two acts of the play and do everything that he could to prove to the little mother that, although he was engaged to be married, she still retained her place in his heart.

Dinner over, he went quickly to the door and opened it, and as his mother passed out, he put his arm round her shoulders and whispered: "Mummie dear, slip up to your room and wait there for me. I want to talk to you." The look of gratitude that he received from the dear little woman was an immense reward for his unselfishness. Then he went up to Graham and said: "Look



He was eighteen; and so presently, repulsed by her tongue but enticed by her eyes, he left his chair and found himself said suddenly. "I love to come here like

sitting on the
this. I hope



sitting on the settee with Ethel. She was kinder than usual that night, sweeter and more girlish. "You're a darling," he this. I hope you'll be ill for a month."

here, old boy: I find I sha'n't be able to go along with you now, but I'll join you for the last act."

"Oh, rot!" said Graham. "What's up? Betty'll be awfully upset."

"No, she won't," said Peter. "I'm going to send her a note." And while the others were getting ready, he dashed off a few lines to the girl, who like himself understood the family feeling. It contained only a few lines, but they were characteristically Peterish and were calculated to make Betty add one more brick to the beautiful construction of her love for him, because they showed that he understood women and their sensitiveness and realized their urgent need of tenderness and appreciation.

AS soon as the party had driven away, Peter collected a pipe and a tin of tobacco and went quickly up the wide staircase. He barged into his mother's own particular room with all his old impetuosity, and found her sitting at a table by the side of a great work-basket in which he saw a large collection of socks he had brought home with him and which stood badly in need of motherly attention.

This little room was unlike any other in the house. In it his mother had placed all the pet pieces of inexpensive furniture which had been in the sitting-room of the little house in which she and the Doctor had settled down when they were first married. The walls were covered with photographs of the family in all stages—Peter as a chubby baby with a great curl on top of his head; Belle, in a perambulator, smiling widely at a colored nurse; Graham in his first sailor-suit; Ethel bravely arrayed in a party frock, "Thinking of Mother;" and over the mantelpiece an enlargement of the Doctor taken when he was a young man, with an unlined face and thick, straight hair, his jaws set with that grim determination which had carried him over so many obstacles. It was a room at which Graham, Belle and Ethel frequently laughed. But Peter liked and respected it.

"I'm sorry you're not going to the theater, dear," said Mrs. Guthrie.

"No, you're not," said Peter.

"Oh, indeed I am. I like you to enjoy yourself with the others, and Betty'll be there. Stay here a few minutes, though, and as the curtain always goes up late, you'll be in time to see the whole of the play."

"Blow the play," said Peter. "I'm going to talk to you just as long as I like. I can go to the theater any night of the week."

Mrs. Guthrie dropped her work, bent forward and put her cheek against Peter's. "You're a dear, dear boy," she said. "You're my very own Peter, and even if I were a poet I couldn't find words to tell you how happy you make me. I did my best not to let you see I was just a wee bit hurt because you haven't had time to spare me a few moments since you came home; but after all, I'm only a little old mother now, and I must try to remember that."

"Oh, don't," said Peter. "I'm awfully sorry I've been such a thoughtless brute. No one can ever take your place, and you know it." He went down on his knees at her side and wrapped his strong arms round her and put his head upon her breast as he used to do when he was a little chap, and remained there for a while perfectly happy.

PRESENTLY he returned to his chair and to his pipe, and began to talk. "By gad!" he said. "It's good to be home again. I find myself looking at everything differently now—quite time, too. I should have been at work years ago. Universities are great places, and I shall never regret Oxford, but they take a long time to prepare a fellow to become a man." Then he laughed one of his great laughs, and his chair creaked and one or two of the old pieces of furniture seemed to rattle. "I hid those socks, but I knew you'd find them. What a mother you are, Mother! I'll make a bet with you."

"I never bet," said Mrs. Guthrie, who was all smiles.

"I'll bet you a hundred dollars you never mend Graham's socks. Now, tell the truth."

"Well, no, I don't. He doesn't like socks that have been mended; and anyway, he isn't my first-born."



When they arrived at the studio-apartment in Fortieth Street, they found that Papowsky was giving an Egyptian night, and nearly all the habitués were in appropriate costumes.

"There you are," said Peter. "Pay up and smile. Oh, I say; I'm sorry Father's seedy. He sticks too closely to those microbes of his. I shall try to screw up courage and take him on a bust now and then. It'll do him good. Think he'll go?"

Mrs. Guthrie looked up eagerly. "Try," she said. "Please do try. Now that you've come home for good, I want you to do everything you can to get closer to your father. He's a splendid man, and he's always thinking about you and the others, but I know that he'll never make the first move. He doesn't seem to understand how to do it. But he deserves everything you can give him."

"Yes, that's what I think," said Peter. "I've been thinking it over, especially since I saw the way Kenyon's father treats him. I shall pluck up courage one of these nights, beard him in his den and have it out, and put things straight. I want him much more than he wants me; and, d'you know, I think Graham wants him too."

"I'm sure he does," said Mrs. Guthrie. "Graham's a good boy, but he's very reckless and thinks he's older than he is. He comes to me sometimes with his troubles—but how can I help him? I wish, I *do* wish he'd go sometimes to his father!"

"Well, I'm going to try to alter all that," said Peter. "It's got to be done somehow. Father's always been afraid of us, and we've always been afraid of Father. It's silly. What d'you think of Nicholas? Isn't he a corker?"

Mrs. Guthrie smiled. "He improves on acquaintance," she said. "He's certainly one of the most charming men I've ever met. Do you think?"—she lowered her voice a little—"there's anything between him and Belle?"

"Good Lord!" said Peter. "I never thought of that. Is there?"

"Well," said Mrs. Guthrie, "I've noticed one or two little things. He's been writing to her, you know."

"Has he? By Jove! Well, then, there must be something in it. He's a lazy beggar, and I don't believe I've ever seen him write a letter in his life. Gee, I shall be awfully glad to have him for a brother-in-law! That place in Shrop-

shire! Belle would make an absolutely perfect mistress of it, although there's plenty of life in the old man yet. By Jove, it was good to see the relationship between Nick and his father. It staggered me. Why, they were as good as friends. They go about arm in arm and tell each other everything. It used to make me feel quite sick sometimes. Think of my going about arm in arm with Father!"

"Think of Belle becoming the Countess of Shropshire! I should like that. It would be another feather in your father's cap—your father, who used to carry siphons in a basket."

"More power to his elbow," said Peter. "It might have been better for me if I'd carried siphons in a basket. After all, I'm inclined to believe there's no university in the world like the streets. Think of all the men who've graduated from windy corners and muddy gutters! It'd be a fine thing for Ethel, too, if Belle marries Nick. Isn't she an extraordinary kid? Upon my word, she takes my breath away. She's older at sixteen than most women are at thirty. By the way, what's the matter with her? What's anemia, anyhow? She looks fit as a fiddle."

"Oh, she'll soon get over that," said Mrs. Guthrie. "I think they bend over books too much at her school. You know the modern girl isn't like the girls of my generation. I didn't have to learn geometry or piano-playing. I didn't think it was necessary to know Euclid or a smattering of the classics. We learned how to make bread and cook a good steak and iron clothes. You know, husbands don't come home to hear Mozart on a baby grand and enter into discussions about writers with crack-jaw names."

"I know—they don't fill a hungry tummy, do they?"

"No indeed they don't," said Mrs. Guthrie. "And that reminds me that I must go and give your father his little dose. When a doctor isn't well, he never knows how to look after himself." She rose, put down her work and then bent over Peter. "Thank you for coming up to-night, Peter. I've had a queer little pain in my heart for a long time, but

you've taken it all away. Now run along and see your Betty, and don't worry about your little mother any longer."

ON the way to his bedroom Peter passed the door of Ethel's room and drew up short. He had heard her say she was going to bed early. He hadn't had many words with her since he had come back; so he decided to go in and wipe off that debt too. When he tried to open the door he found that it was locked. He started a devil's tattoo with his knuckles. "Are you there, kid?" he shouted out.

The answer was "Yes."

"Well, then, open the door. I want to come in."

After a moment the door was opened and Ethel stood there in a very becoming peignoir. She looked extremely unconcerned and did her best to block the way into the room.

Peter wasn't having any of that. "What's all this?" he asked. "We lock our door now, do we?"

"Yes, sometimes," said Ethel. "Why aren't you at the theater?" She shot a surreptitious glance towards the window, which was open.

"I've been having a talk with Mother," said Peter. "Hello! I see you've been trigging up your room. Frightfully swaggar now, isn't it? New art, eh? You're coming on, my dear, there's no mistake about that. I'm afraid you find us all appallingly provincial, don't you?"

The broad grin on Peter's face was no new thing to Ethel. He had always guyed her and treated her as though she were a sort of freak. All the same, she liked his coming in and was flattered to know that he thought it worth while to bother about her. But she began to edge him to the door. He had come at a most unpropitious moment.

"Oho!" said Peter. "So this is what higher education does for you! A nice mixture—cigarettes and candies—I must say. Now I know why you locked your door. With a marshmallow in one hand and an Egyptian Beauty in the other, you lie on your sofa in the latest thing in peignoirs and see life through the pages of—what?" He picked up a book

from the table. "Good Lord!" he added, "you don't mean to say you stuff this piffle into you?" It was a collection of plays by Strindberg.

"Oh, go on to the theater!" said Ethel. "You're being horridly Oxford now, and I hate it."

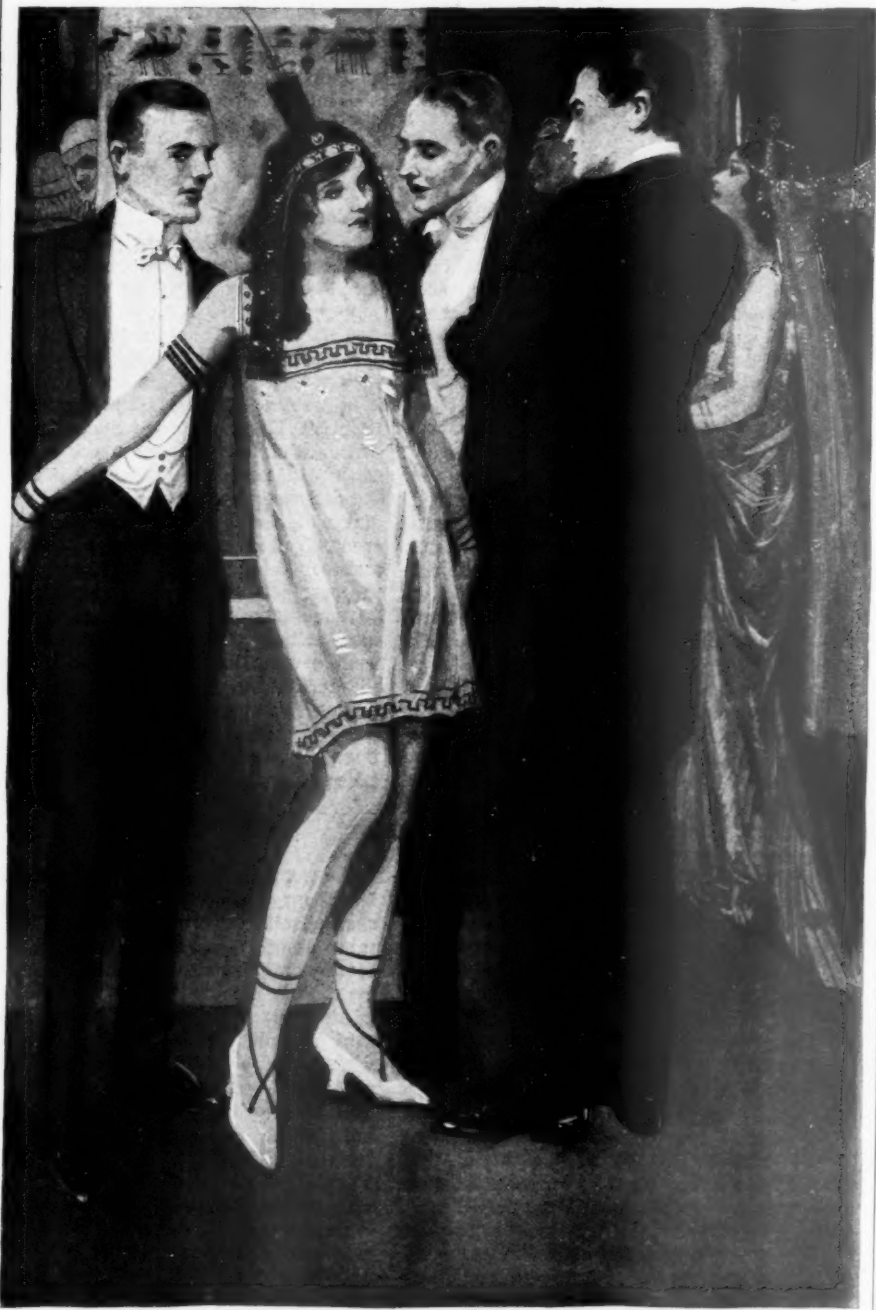
"You'll get a lot more of it before I've done with you," said Peter, laughing. "All the same, you look very nice, my dear. I'm very proud of you, and I hope you will do me the honor to be seen about with me sometimes. But how about taking some of that powder off your nose? If you begin trying to hide it at sixteen, it'll be lost altogether at twenty." He made a sudden pounce at her, and holding both her hands so that she could not scratch, rubbed all the powder away from her little proud nose and made for the door, just missing the cushion which came flying after him, and took himself and his big laugh along the passage.

Immensely relieved at being left alone, Ethel locked the door again and went over to her dressing-table, where she repaired damage with quick, deft fingers. With another glance at the window,—a glance in which there was some impatience,—she arranged herself on the settee to wait.

CHAPTER XXI

NO wonder Peter had made remarks about this room. It was decidedly characteristic of its owner. All its furniture was white, and its hangings were of creamy cretonne covered with little rosebuds. The narrow bed was tucked away in a corner, so that the writing-desk, the sofa and the revolving book-stand—on which stood a bowl of mammoth chrysanthemums—might dominate the room. Several mezzotints of Watts' pictures hung on the walls, and a collection of framed illustrations of the Arabian Nights, by Dulac. The whole effect was one of attempted sophistication.

Before many minutes had gone by, a rope-ladder dangled outside the window, and this was followed immediately afterwards by the lithe and wiry figure of a boy. Wearing a rather sheepish expression, he remained sitting on the sill,



Again she laughed. "Oh, say!" she said. "What are you, anyway? Reporters on the trail of a story? I'm telling you the truth. Why not? As for Ita—! Oh-oh! She put it all over a boob, she did. She's ambitious, she is. She was out to find an angel—that was her game. She told us so from the first."

swinging his legs. "Hello!" said he. "How are you feeling?"

"There's some improvement to-night," said Ethel. "Wont you come in? Were you waiting for the signal?"

"You bet!"

He seemed a nice boy, with a frank, honest face, a blunt nose and a laughing mouth. His hair was dark and thick, and his shoulders square. He was eighteen, and he looked every day of it. He lived next door and was the son of a man who owned a line of steamships; his French mother was not on speaking terms with Mrs. Guthrie, owing to the fact that the Doctor had been obliged to remonstrate about her parrot. This expensive prodigy gave the most lifelike and frequent imitations of cats, trolley-cars, newsboys, sirens and other superfluous and distressing disturbances on the window-sill of the room which was next to his laboratory. So this boy and girl—unconsciously playing all over again the story of the *Montagues* and *Capulets*—met serreptitiously night after night, the boy coming over the roof and using the rope-ladder—which had played its part in all the great romances. Was there any harm in him? Well, he was eighteen.

"What'll you have first," asked Ethel in her best hostess manner, "—candy or cigarettes?"

"Both," said the boy; and with a lump in his cheek and an expression of admiration in both eyes he started a cigarette. He was about to sit on the settee at Ethel's feet, but she pointed to a chair, and into this he subsided, crossing one leg over the other and hitching his trousers rather high so that he might display to full advantage a pair of very smart socks, newly purchased.

"I hope you locked your bedroom door," said Ethel, "and please don't forget to whisper. There's no chance of our being caught, but we may as well be careful."

The boy nodded and made a little face. "If Father found out about this," he said, "—oh, gee! What did you do with Ellen after she bounced in last night?"

"Oh, I gave her one of my hats. I told her that if she kept quiet there was

a frock waiting for her. She's safe. Now amuse me!"

FOR some minutes the boy remained silent, worrying his brain as to how to comply with the girl's rather difficult and peremptory request. He knew that she was not easy to amuse. He was a little frightened at the books she read, and looked up to her with a certain amount of awe. He liked her best when she said nothing and was content to sit quite quiet and look pretty. After deep and steady thought he took a chance. "Do you know this one?" he asked, and started whistling a new rag-time tune through his teeth.

It was new to Ethel. She liked it. Its rhythm set her feet moving. "Oh, that's fine," she said. "What are the words?"

The boy shook his head, thereby stimulating her curiosity a hundred-fold.

"Oh, don't be silly. I shall know them sooner or later, whatever they are—besides, I'm not a child."

The boy lied chivalrously. "Well, honestly, I don't know them—something about 'Row, row, row,' and I don't know the rest."

She knew that he did know. She liked him for not telling her the truth, but she made a mental note to order the song the following morning.

And so, for about an hour, these two young things who imagined that this was life carried on a desultory conversation, while the boy gradually filled the room with cigarette smoke and reluctantly remained a whole yard away from the sofa. It was all very childish and simple, but to them it was romance with a very big *R*. They were making believe they had thrown the world back some hundreds of years. He was a knight and she a lady in an enemy's castle; and although their mothers didn't speak, they liked to ignore the fact that Mrs. Guthrie would have had no objection to his coming to tea as often as he desired and taking Ethel for walks in broad daylight whenever he wished. But—he was eighteen; and so presently, repulsed by her tongue but enticed by her eyes, he left his chair and found himself sitting on the settee at

Ethel's feet, holding her hand, which thrilled him very much. She was kinder than usual that night, sweeter and more girlish. Her stockings were awfully pretty, too, and her hair went into more than usually delicious ripples round her face.

"You're a darling," he said suddenly. "I love to come here like this. I hope you'll be ill for a month." And he slid forward with gymnastic clumsiness and put his arm around her shoulder. He was just going to kiss her and so satisfy an overwhelming craving, when there was a soft knock on the door and Dr. Guthrie's voice followed it. "Are you awake, Ethel?"

The boy sprang to his feet, stood for a moment with a look of peculiar shame on his face, turned on his heels, made for the window, went through it like a rabbit and up the troubadour ladder, which disappeared after him.

Ethel held her breath and remained transfixed. Again the knock came, and the question was repeated. But she made no answer; and presently, when the sound of footsteps died away, she got up, peevishly kicked a small pile of cigarette ash which the boy had dropped upon her carpet, and said to herself: "Just as he was going to kiss me! Goodness, how annoying Father is!"

CHAPTER XXII

THE following morning Belle took Nicholas Kenyon for a walk. Dressed in a suit of blue flannel with white bone buttons, with a pair of white spats gleaming over patent leather shoes, and a gray hat set jauntily on his head, Kenyon looked as fresh and as dapper as though he had been to bed the night before at ten o'clock. He had, as a matter of fact, come home with the milk; but he was one of those men who possess the enviable gift of looking healthy and untired after the sort of nights which make the ordinary man turn to chemistry and vibro-massage.

Belle had sported a new hat for the occasion. This fact Kenyon realized with that queer touch of intuition which was characteristic of him. "By Jove!" he said. "That's something like a hat,

Belle. Hearty congratulations. You suit us to perfection."

Belle beamed upon him. "But you would say that, anyhow, wouldn't you?"

"Perfectly true, but in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, I shouldn't mean it."

They turned into Madison Avenue. It was an exquisite morning. The whole city was bathed in sun, but the refreshing tang of late autumn was in the air.

"Tell me," said Belle presently, "what are your plans?"

"Well," said Kenyon, "I'm going to accept your father's perfectly charming hospitality for a fortnight and then take rooms in a bachelor apartment-house, of which Graham has told me, for the winter."

"You're going to settle down here?" cried Belle.

"Rather—for six months. I'm here to study the conditions, make myself familiar with the characteristics and draw from both what I hope will be the foundations of much usefulness." Kenyon considered that he had enveloped his true mission—which was to lighten the pockets of all unwary young men—with a satirical verbiage that did him credit.

"I thought perhaps you'd come for some other reason," said Belle, whose whole face showed her disappointment.

Kenyon shot a quick glance at her. How naïve she was—how very much too easy—but nevertheless, how very young and desirable! "That goes without saying, you delicious thing," he replied, closing his hand warmly round her arm for a moment and so bringing the light back to her eyes. "By the way," he continued, "what's the matter with Graham?"

"I don't know that anything's the matter with Graham."

"I think so. I notice a worried look about him that he didn't have at Oxford; he seems to be always on the verge of telling me something, and drawing back at the last minute. I must make a point of finding out what his trouble is. Peter and I were discussing it this morning after breakfast. We're both a bit anxious about him. Do you know if your father has noticed it?"

"Father? Oh, he doesn't notice anything. He believes Graham is working very hard and doing well. He knows less about what goes on in our house than the people who live next door."

"That's rather a pity. I'm all for complete confidence between father and son. However, I shall play father to Graham for a bit and see what can be done for him. He puzzles me. There's a mystery somewhere."

SOMETHING of this mystery was disclosed to Kenyon and Peter that night. After dining them both at the Harvard Club,—a place which filled Kenyon with admiration and surprise,—Graham suddenly suggested, with a queer touch of excitement, that they should go with him to his apartment.

"Your apartment?" said Peter. "What on earth do you mean?"

"Well, come and see," said Graham.

The two elder men looked at each other in amazement. Kenyon's quick mind ran ahead, but Peter, the unsophisticated, was quite unable to understand what in the world Graham wanted an apartment for, when he lived at home. They all three left West Forty-fourth Street in silence and walked arm in arm down Fifth Avenue as far as Twenty-eighth Street. Here they turned westward and followed Graham, who was wearing an air of rather sheepish pride, up the steps of an old brownstone house with a rather shabby portico.

"Dismal-looking hole," said Peter.

"Wait!" said Graham, and he put his finger on a bell. The door opened automatically, and he led the way into a scantily furnished hall and up three flights of dingily red-carpeted stairs. At a door on the left of the passage he rang again, and after a lengthy pause was admitted to a small apartment by a colored maid, who gave a wide grin of recognition.

"Come right in," said Graham. "Lily, take our hats and coats. Hang them up and then go and get some drinks."

Kenyon looked about him curiously. He could see that the place was newly furnished and that everything had been chosen by a man. He glanced into the

dining-room. The pictures were sporting and the furniture "Mission." He detected no sign of a woman's hand anywhere. He began to be puzzled. He had expected to find something quite different. But when Graham opened the door of the sitting-room and said, "Well, here we are, Ita!" and he saw a small, olive-skinned girl rise up from a settee and run forward to Graham with a little cry of welcome, he knew that his guess about the situation had been right. So this was the mystery.

Still with the same air of sheepish pride, Graham said: "Peter, this is Miss Ita Strabosck. My brother, Ita. And this is Nicholas Kenyon, who's a great friend of mine. They've just come over from England, and so of course I've brought them to see you."

The little girl held out a very shy hand and said: "I am so glad. Eet ees very good of you to come."

In a curiously plain, tight frock of some soft black material, cut square across her tiny breasts and leaving her arms bare almost to the shoulders, she stood with one knee bent, looking from one man to the other with a sort of wistful eagerness to be treated kindly. She held a tiny black Teddy-bear with red eyes, against her cheek, like a child.

Peter for a reason which he was unable to explain to himself, felt a wave of sympathy go over him. He not only accepted the girl on her face value, but somehow or other believed her to be younger and more romantic than she looked. She seemed to him to have stepped out of the pages of some Arabian book—to be a little exotic whom Graham must have discovered far away from her native hot-house. He liked the way in which her thick hair was arranged round her face, and he would have sworn that she was without guile.

Not so Kenyon. "Great Scott!" he said to himself. "Here's a little devil for you. Our young friend Graham has had his leg pulled. I've seen mosquitoes before, but the poison of this one will take all the ingenuity of an expert to counteract."

He sat down and watched the girl, who threw one quick, antagonistic glance at him and attached herself to

Peter, to whom she talked in monosyllables. She might only very recently have left a convent school, except that her doglike worship of Graham seemed to prove that she owed him a deep debt of gratitude for some great service.

Graham watched her too, and his expression showed Kenyon that even if he didn't love her, he believed in her and was proud of himself.

CHAPTER XXIII

BY a sort of mutual consent the three men left the apartment in Twenty-eighth Street early. They did not desire to finish the evening at any cabaret or club. They called the first passing taxicab and drove home. By mutual consent also, they never once referred to Ita Strabosck, but discussed everything else under the sun. Kenyon had never been so useful. With consummate tact—but all the while with the picture in his mind of the cunning little actress whom they had just left—he led the conversation from dancing to baseball and from country-clubs to women's clothes. Whenever the cab passed a strong light, Graham gave a quick, examining glance at Peter's face. He knew old Peter as well as Peter knew his piano, and he was quite well aware of the fact that although his brother laughed a good deal at Kenyon's quaint turn of phrase, he was upset at what he had seen.

It was just after eleven o'clock when they went into the smoking-room of the house in Fifty-second Street. Mrs. Guthrie and Ethel had gone to bed. Belle had not returned from a theater party. The Doctor was at work in his laboratory. He heard the boys come in. The sound of their voices made him raise his head eagerly. He even half-rose from his chair in a desire to join them and hear them talk, and laugh with them and get from them some of that sense of youth which they exuded so pleasantly, but his terrible shyness got the better of him once more. How ironical it was that with complete unconsciousness he was leaving it to such a man as Nicholas Kenyon to play father to his second son, who had never in his short life needed a real father so badly.

For some little time—smoking a good cigar with complete appreciation—Kenyon continued to give forth his impressions of New York so far as he knew it. He was especially amusing in his description of the effect upon him of the first sight of the Great White Way. Then, all of a sudden, there came a pause. It was Peter who broke the silence. "Graham, old boy," he said, "tell us about it. What does it all mean? Good Lord! you're only twenty-four. Are you married?"

Before Graham could reply, Kenyon sent out a scoffing laugh. "Married! Is he married?" he cried. "My good old grandfather's ghost, Peter! But how indescribably green you are. Hang me if you're not like a sort of *Peter Pan*! You've passed through Harvard and Oxford with a skin over your eyes. It's all very beautiful, very commendable—and what Belle would call 'very dear' of you—and all that sort of thing; but somehow you make me feel that I've got to go through life with you in the capacity of the sort of guide one hires in Paris—the human Baedeker."

"But if Graham hasn't married that poor girl," said Peter bluntly, "what's he doing with her?"

GRAHAM sprang to his feet and began to walk about the room. All about his slight, well-built figure there was a curious nervousness and excitement. Even in the carefully subdued light of the room it was plain to see that his face was rather haggard and drawn. The boy looked years older than Peter. "I'll start off," he said, "by giving you fellows my word of honor that what I'm going to tell you is the truth. I have to begin like this, because if either of you were to tell me this story I don't think I should be able to believe it. . . . Soon after I returned from Europe I went to a pestilential but rather amusing place in Fortieth Street. It's a huge studio run by a woman who calls herself Papowsky. You told me about it, Nick, and it's what you would call the last word in super-effeteness. Ita Strabosck was there. I found I liked her at once. I didn't fall in love with her, but she appealed to me, and it was

simply to see her that I went there several times. I knew the place was pretty rotten, and I didn't cotton to the people who were there or the things they did. I even knew that the police had their eyes on it, but I liked it all the more because of that. It gave it a sort of zest, like absinthe in whisky."

"Quite!" said Kenyon. "Fire away!"

"The last time I went there, Ita took me into a corner and begged me to take her away. I don't think I shall ever forget the sight of that poor little wretch trembling and shaking. It was pretty bad. Well, I took her away. I got her out by a fire-escape when nobody was watching us, dodged through a window of a restaurant on the first floor, and so out into the street. It was very tricky work. The day after, I took the apartment that you came to to-night and furnished it; and there Ita has been ever since. I go to see her nearly every night. She's happy now, and safe, and I don't regret it. She hated the place and the things she had been forced to do, and nothing will make me believe she was bad. She was just a victim—that's all. And if I have to go without things, I don't care so long as she has all she needs. That's the story. What d'you think of it?"

Peter, got up, went over to his brother and held out his hand silently. With a rather pathetic expression of gratitude in his eyes Graham took it and held it tight. "That's like you, Peter," he said a little huskily.

Kenyon made no movement. With a pitying smile he looked at the two boys as they stood eye to eye. The whole thing sounded to him like a fairy-tale, and for a moment he wondered whether Graham were not endeavoring to obtain their sympathy under false pretenses. Then he made up his mind that Graham—like the man with whom he had lived at Oxford—was green also, for all that he had knocked about in New York for two years. Not from any kindness of heart, but simply because he wanted to use Graham as a means of introducing him to the young male wealthy set of the city, he determined somehow or other to get him out of this disastrous entanglement. He would, however, go to

work tactfully, without allowing Graham to think that he had made a complete fool of himself.

"Um!" he said. "It's a pitiful story, Graham. You behaved devilish well, old boy. Not many men would have acted so quickly and so unselfishly. Now sit down and tell me a few things."

Gladly enough Graham did so, heaving a great sigh. He was glad he had made a clean breast of all this. He was too young to keep it a secret. He wanted sympathy urgently, and a little human help. Peter loaded and lighted a pipe and drew his chair into the group.

"This girl Ita What's-her-name loves you, of course?"

Graham nodded.

"Anyone could see that," said Peter.

"But she'd been in that place some time before you came along, I take it."

Graham shuddered. "I hate to think so," he said.

Peter kicked the leg of the nearest chair.

"How d'you feel?" asked Kenyon.

"Awfully sorry for her," said Graham.

"Yes, of course. What I mean is, are you all right?"

Graham looked puzzled. "I find it rather difficult to pay for everything," he said, "especially as I've been damned unlucky lately."

The man of the world involuntarily raised his eyebrows. "Good Lord!" he said to himself. "And this boy is the son of a specialist. Blind—blind!" Then he spoke aloud, passing on to another point: "How long do you think it is incumbent upon you to make yourself the guardian of this girl?"

Graham shrugged his shoulders. "She comes from Poland. Her father and mother are dead, and she has no one to look after her."

"I'll help you," said Peter.

THAT was exactly what Kenyon didn't want. He got up, went over to the table and mixed a drink. "Potter off to bed, Graham, old boy," he said. "Get a good night's rest. You need it. We'll go further into the matter in a day or two. It requires serious consideration. Anyway, I congratulate you.

You're a bit of a knight, and you've my complete admiration." He led the boy to the door, patted him on the shoulder and got rid of him. Then he returned to Peter, whose face showed that he was laboring under many conflicting emotions.

"Nick," he said, "he's only twenty-four—just making a beginning. He did the only thing he could do under the circumstances, but—but what would Father say?"

"I don't think it's a question as to what your father would say," said Kenyon. "If I know anything, the way to put it is what can your father do? Of all men in the city, he's the one who could be most useful in this peculiar mess-up. . . . Peter, you and I have got to get that boy out of this; otherwise—"

"Otherwise what?"

"Otherwise—quite shortly—the police are likely to fish out of the river the dead body of a promising lad of twenty-four, and there'll be great grief in this house."

"What d'you mean?"

"Exactly what I say. That girl's a liar, a cheat and a fraud."

"I don't believe you."

"I don't care whether you believe me or not. She's rotten from head to foot. She's as easy to read as an advertisement. She's taking advantage of a fellow who's as unsuspicious as you are. You're both green—green, I tell you—as green as grass."

"I'd rather be green," cried Peter hotly, "than go through life with your rotten skepticism."

"Would you? You talk like an infant. Graham will want to marry some day—and then what? Good Heavens! Hasn't anybody taken the trouble to tell you two any of the facts of life? You are neither of you fit to be allowed out in the streets without a nurse. It's appalling. 'Skeptical,' you call me. You're blind, I tell you. Blind! So's the old man in the next room. There's an ugly shadow over this house, Peter, as sure as you're alive. Don't stand there glaring at me. I'm talking facts. If you've got any regard for your brother and his health and his future, if you want to save your mother from unutterable suffering and your

father from a hideous awakening, don't talk any further drivel to me, but make up your mind that that girl, Ita Strabosck, has it in her power to turn Graham into a suicide. She's a liar,—a liar and a trickster and a menace,—and I'll make it my business to prove it to you and Graham."

"You can't."

"Can't I? We'll see about that. And you've got to help me. We've got to make Graham see that he must shake her off at once—at once, I tell you. *The alternative you know.*"

Peter got up and strode about the room. He was worried and anxious. He didn't, unfortunately, fully appreciate the gravity of this affair, because, as Kenyon had said so tauntingly, he was a child in such matters. But what he did appreciate was that his only brother had done something, however sympathetic the motive, which might have far-reaching and disastrous consequences.

He turned to Kenyon, who had made himself comfortable. "I'll help you for all I'm worth, Nick," he said.

"Right," said Kenyon. "I'll think out a line of action and let you know tomorrow. There's no time to be lost."

CHAPTER XXIV

KENYON got rid of Peter too, after a short time.

Apart from the fact that he was going to wait up for Belle, he wanted to be alone. He was angry. It was just like his bad luck to come all the way to America and find that the two men who had it in their power to be of substantial use to him were both fully occupied—one being hopelessly in love, the other in money trouble and in what he recognized as a difficult and even dangerous position. With characteristic selfishness, he resented these things. They made it necessary for him to exercise his brain—not for himself, which was his idea of the whole art of living, but for others. There were other things that he resented also. One was the fact that Peter was what he called a "damn child."

And then there was Graham. He, like untold hundreds of his type, had a cer-

tain amount of precocity but no knowledge. He had merely peeked at the truth of things through a chink. And what was the result? Worse than total ignorance. Deep down in whatever soul he had, Nicholas Kenyon honestly and truly believed in friendship between father and son. He knew,—none better,—because it was his business to observe, that a young man was frightfully and terribly handicapped who went out into the world unwarned, unadvised and uninitiated. He had often come across men like Peter and Graham whose lives had been absolutely ruined at the very outset for the reason that their fathers had either been too cowardly or too indifferent to give them the benefit of their own experience and early troubles. In his mind's eye he could see the excellent and distinguished Doctor rounding his back over experiments for the benefit of humanity, while he utterly neglected to give two of the human beings for whom he was responsible the few words of advice which would render it unnecessary for them some day to become his patients.

If Kenyon had been a more generous man, if in his nature there had been one small grain of unselfishness, he would have gone at that very moment, then and there, to the door of the Doctor's laboratory, sat down opposite the man who spent his life in it with such noble concentration and begged him to desert his microbes and turn his attention to his sons. As it was, Kenyon neglected to take an opportunity which would have enabled the recording angel to make one very good entry on the blank credit side of his account, and concentrated upon a way in which he could use Peter and Graham for his own material ends. He was immediately faced, therefore, with two "jobs," as he called them: one, to queer Peter's engagement with Betty, in order that he might achieve his friend's whole attention; the other to lift Graham out of his ghastly entanglement, for the same purpose. Relying upon his ingenuity with complete confidence, Kenyon mixed himself another highball and listened with a certain amount of eagerness for Belle's light step in the hallway.

HE hadn't long to wait. He had just gone into the dimly lighted hall with the intention of getting some air on the front door-step, when the door opened and Belle let herself in.

"You keep nice hours," he said.

Belle had been dancing. Her cheeks were glowing and her eyes bright; she had never looked so all-conqueringly youthful or so imbued with the joy of life. She came across to him like a young goddess of the forest, with the wild beauty and that suggestion of unrestraint which always made Kenyon's blood run quickly.

"Have you waited for me?" she asked. "How perfectly adorable of you!"

"What have you been doing?"

"Oh, the usual things — dinner, theater, dancing."

Kenyon went nearer and put his hands on her arms, hotly. "Curse those men!" he said.

"What men?"

"The men who've been holding you to-night. Why have I come over? Can't you scratch these engagements and wait for me? I'm not going to share you with every Tom, Dick and Harry in this place."

A feeling of triumph came to Belle—a new feeling, because hitherto this man's attitude had been that of master. "You're jealous!" she cried.

Kenyon turned away sharply. For once he was not playing with this girl for the sport of the thing, just to see what she would say and do, in order to pass away the time. The whole evening had tended to upset his calculations and plans. He had found himself thrown suddenly into a position of responsibility—a state that he avoided with rare and consummate agility. And now came Belle, radiant and high-spirited, from an evening spent with other men, and more beautiful and desirable than ever.

Belle turned him back. "You *are* jealous, you *are*!"

"Oh, good Lord, no," said Kenyon with his most bored drawl. "Why should I be? After all, it isn't for me to care what you do, is it? It's a large world, and there's plenty of room for both of us—what?"

He walked away.

Triumph blazed in Belle's heart. She saw in Kenyon's eyes that he was saying the very opposite of the thoughts that were in his mind. She almost shouted with joy. She had longed to see into the heart of this man who was under such complete and aggravating self-control—even to hurt him to obtain a big, spontaneous outburst of emotion from him. She loved him desperately, indiscreetly, far too well for her peace of mind; and she urgently needed some answering sparks of fire.

She didn't move. She stood with her cloak thrown back, her chin held high and the light falling on her dark hair and white flesh. This was her moment.

"Yes, there *is* plenty of room for us both," she said, "and the fact that I shall go on dancing with other men needn't inconvenience you in the least. I don't suppose we shall even see each other in the crowd. There are many men who'd give their ears to dance with me—I mean men who *can* dance—not bored Englishmen."

She drew blood. Kenyon went across to her quickly. "How dare you talk to me like that! Curse these men and their ears. Who's brought me to this country? You know I came for you—you know it. I *am* jealous—as jealous as hell. And if ever you let another man put his arms round you, I'll smash his face." He put out his hot hands to catch her.

But with a little teasing laugh Belle dodged and flitted into the library. The spirit of coquettishness was awake in her. *She* had the upper hand now, and a small account to render for missed mails and an appearance of being too sure. She threw off her cloak and stood with her back to the fireplace, looking like one of Romney's pictures of Lady Hamilton, come to life.

Kenyon strode after her, stirred by her beauty. "In future," he said, "you dance with me. You understand?"

Belle raised her eyebrows and then bowed profoundly. "As you say, O my master!" And then she held out her arms with a sudden delicious abandon. "Take me, then. Let's dance all the way through life."

Kenyon caught her; Belle hummed a dance-tune; and about the room these two went, in perfect unison, until almost breathless Belle broke into a little laugh, stopped singing and said: "The band's tired." But Kenyon held her tighter and closer, and kissed her lips again and again and again.

With a little touch of warning in its tone, the clock on the mantelpiece presently struck two, and Belle freed herself and straightened her hair with a rather uncertain hand. "I must go now," she said breathlessly. "Father may be working late. Supposing he came through this room?"

"Serve him right," said Kenyon.

They went upstairs together on tip-toe, and halted a moment on the threshold of Belle's bedroom. Through the half-open door Kenyon saw the glow of yellow light on the dressing-table and the corner of a bed. Once more he kissed her; and then, breathing hard, went to his own room, stood in the darkness for a moment and thanked his lucky star for the gift of Belle.

CHAPTER XXV

THE following afternoon Peter, Kenyon and Belle went to see Ranken Townsend's pictures and to have tea with Betty. The little party was a great success. Peter and the artist got on splendidly together—which filled Betty with joy and gladness; and Kenyon had added to the general smoothness and pleasantness by offering extremely intelligent and enthusiastic criticism of the canvases shown him, drawing subtle comparisons between them and those of Reynolds and Gainsborough. Like all true artists, Townsend was a humble man and unsuspicious. He believed, in the manner of all good workers, that he had yet to find himself, although he had met with uncommon success. He was therefore much heartened and warmed by the remarks of one who, although young, proved himself to be something of a judge. When Kenyon received a cordial invitation to come again to the studio, he solidified the good impression he had made by saying that he would be honored and delighted.

There had been a sharp shower during tea, but the sky had cleared when they left Gramercy Park, taking Betty with them, and so they started out to walk home.

Belle and Betty went on in front, arm in arm, and the two friends followed. This suited Kenyon exactly. He had laid his plan and had something to say to Peter.

Belle was very happy, and she showed it. She looked round at Betty with her eyes dancing. "I can see that you're dying to ask me something," she said. "But don't. You and I don't have to ask each other questions. We've always told each other everything, and we always will."

"Belle, you're enga—"

"S-s-s-h! Don't mention the word."

"Why?"

"Well, we've been talking this afternoon, and Nicholas says, and I think he's right,—though I wish he weren't,—that he doesn't want to go to Father until he's been here longer and has made up his mind what he's going to do. You see, he's not well off. He's got to work,—although I can't fancy Nicholas working,—and so we're not going to be really engaged for a few months. Meantime, he's going to look round and find something to do. That'll be easy. You don't know how clever he is—not merely clever; a monkey can be clever, or a conjurer; the word I meant to use was *able*. Aren't you glad? Isn't it splendid?"

"Oh, my dear," said Betty, "wouldn't it be perfectly wonderful if we could be married on the same day? Of course I've seen it coming—"

Belle laughed. "I knew you'd say that. Personally, I didn't see it coming. After we'd left Oxford, I began to think that Nicholas had only been flirting with me. He wrote such curious, aloof little letters, and very few of them. They might have been written by an epigrammist to his maiden aunt; but last night—well, last night made everything different, and this afternoon we've had a long talk. Of course, I wish we were going to be openly and properly engaged, but I'm very happy, and so I don't grumble."

"As the future Countess of Shropshire, I wonder whether you will ever give a little back room in your beautiful English place to the young American lawyer and his wife!"

"Betty, I swear to you that I don't care a cent about all that now—I mean the title and the place. It's just Nicholas that I want—Nicholas, and no one else. I wouldn't care if he were what he calls a 'boulder' or a 'townee.' My dear, I'm mad about him—just mad."

"Isn't everything as right as can be?" said Betty. "The more I see Peter, the more I love him. He's—well, he's a man, and he's mine. He's mine for another reason, and that's because he's always going to be a boy, and I'm here to look after him. He'll need me. And I must have him need me, too, because I need to be needed. Do you understand?"

Belle nodded. "You're the born mother, my dear," she said, "whereas, I'm—well, not. I want love—just love. I'll give everything I've got in the world for that—everything. Love and excitement—to go from place to place meeting new people, hearing new languages, seeing new types, living bigly and broadly, being consulted by a man who's brilliant and far-seeing—*that's* what I need. That's *my* idea of life. Ah-h!" She shot out a deep breath and threw her chin up as though to challenge argument.

Betty watched her with admiration. She had never looked so unusual, so exhilarated, so fine. All about her there was the very essence of youth and courage and health. There was a glow in her white skin that was the mere reflection of the fire that was alight in her heart. Given happiness, this girl would burst into the most fragrant blossoming and gleam among her sisters like a rose in a pansy-bed. Given pain and disillusion, she had it in her to fling rules, observances, caution, common sense and even self-respect to the four winds and go with all possible speed to the devil.

"What would have happened to us both if we hadn't gone to Oxford?" asked Betty with an almost comical touch of gravity. "Think! I should be

doomed to be a little old maid, with nothing but an even smaller dog to keep in order; and as for you—"

"I? Don't let's talk about it. I should have gone top-pace through several years and then, with thirty looming ahead, married a nice, safe man with oodles of money who would spend his life following me round. Thank Heaven, I shall never be the center of that ghastly picture!"

KENYON, perfectly satisfied with his talk to Belle, whom he had secured without binding himself to anything definite, was wearing white spats, and so he picked his way across the wet streets like a cat on hot bricks. For several blocks he permitted Peter to talk about Betty. His affection of interest and sympathy was not so well done as usual. He had determined, with a sort of professional jealousy, not to allow Ita Strabosck to trade on Graham's credulity any longer. All his thoughts were concentrated on his plan to smash up that burlesque arrangement, as he inwardly called it. If anyone were to make use of Graham, he intended to be that one. The girl, at present a humble member of the great army of parasites in which he held a commission, must be cleared out. She was inconveniently in the way.

When Peter was obliged to stop for breath, Kenyon jumped in. "Look here!" he said. "You're coming with me to the shrine of the pernicious Papowsky to-night."

"You mean on Graham's business?" asked Peter. "Is it absolutely necessary to go to that place?"

"Absolutely. You'll see why, if everything works as I think it will, when we get there."

"Right. And how about Graham?"

"You and Graham are going to have dinner with me at Sherry's. I shall have to see that he has half a bottle too much champagne. That'll make him careless and put a bit of devil into him, and when I suggest that he shall take us to Papowsky's, he'll jump at the notion. He's awful keen to show us what a blood he is. Once he gets us inside, the rest will follow."

"I see. By Jove, I shall be thundering glad when Graham's plucked out of this wretched mess. The only trouble is that I'm booked to dine with Mr. Townsend at his club to-night."

"It can't be done," said Kenyon. "Directly you get home you must telephone. Say that an urgent matter has just cropped up and beg to be excused. Call it business,—call it anything you like,—but get out of it."

"All right!" said Peter. "I'm heart and soul with you, old boy. I'm very grateful for all the trouble you're taking. You always were a good chap."

"My dear Peter, add to my possession of the ordinary number of senses one that is almost as rare as the dodo—the sense of gratitude. Hello! Here's some of the family in the car!"

They had halted on the steps of the Doctor's house as Mrs. Guthrie and Ethel were driven up. Kenyon sprang forward, opened the door and handed the ladies out with an air that Raleigh himself would have found commendable.

"Blood tells," said Belle, who watched from the top step with a proud smile.

"Yes," said Betty, "but I prefer muscle. Look!"

The pavement was uneven in front of the house, and the rain had made a little pool. So Peter picked his mother up, as though she were light as a bunch of feathers, and carried her into the house.

CHAPTER XXVI

KENYON, turned out as excellently as usual, led the way into the dining-room at Sherry's. It was a quarter to eight. Every other table was occupied. The large room was too warm and was filled with the conglomerate aromas of food. Peter sat on the right of his host and Graham on the left. Both men were quiet and distraught—Peter because he was anxious, Graham for the reason that he had not been able to leave behind him the carking worries that now fell daily to his lot. Kenyon, on the contrary, was in his best form, and even a little excited. Apart from the fact that he rather liked having something to do that would prove his knowledge of life and the accuracy of

his powers of psychology, he was looking forward to being amused with what went on in the studio-apartment of the Papowsky.

"By Jove!" he said, looking round and arranging his tie over the points of his collar with expert fingers,—a thing which Graham immediately proceeded to do also,—“this place has a quite distinct atmosphere. Don't you think so, Peter?”

"Has it?"

"One would, I see, choose it for a trying and dull-bright dinner with a prospective mother-in-law, or with some dear thing, safely married, with whom one had once rashly imagined oneself to be in love. Waiter, the wine-list!"

Graham laughed.

Kenyon, scoring his first point, continued airily: "For my part, I shall make a point of dining here one night with an alluring young thing fresh from the romantic quietude of a convent school. I feel that these discreet lights and reserved colors will give a certain amount of weight and even solemnity to my careful flattery. —A large bottle of Perrier Jouet '02, and be sparing with the ice. —Peter, I think you'll find this caviare gives many points to the tired stuff that used to be palmed off on us at Buol's and other undergraduate places of puerile riotousness."

The dinner, which Kenyon had ordered with becoming care, would have satisfied the epicureanism of a Russian aristocrat. During all its courses the host kept up a running fire of anecdote which quickly made the table a merry one. He also saw to it that Graham's glass was never empty. They sat laughing, smoking and drinking until they were almost the last people in the room. Then Kenyon suggested adjourning to a club for a game of billiards, which would amuse them until it was time to begin the business of the evening. So they walked round to the Harvard Club, and here Peter—the only one of the party who was completely his own master—became host.

They played until a little short of twelve o'clock. By this time, having been additionally primed up with one or two Scotch whiskies, Graham was ready for anything, and it was then that Kenyon

suggested that he should take them to the famous studio. Graham jumped at the idea, falling, as Kenyon knew that he would, into the little trap set for him. "We're children in your hands, Graham," he said with a subtle touch of flattery. "Lead us into the vortex of art with the lid off. I'm most frightfully keen to see this place, and it'll be great fun for you, duly protected, to find out whether the Papowsky has discovered whether you were the knight errant who rescued one of her victims. Romance, old boy—romance with a big R." And so Graham, more than a little unsteady and with uproarious laughter, led the way.

WHEN they arrived at the studio-apartment in Fortieth Street they found the hall filled with people. It happened that Papowsky was giving an Egyptian night, and nearly all the habitués were in appropriate costumes. With the cunning of her species, this woman knew very well that few things appeal so strongly to a certain type of men and women as dressing up—which generally means undressing. The Japanese servant who took their hats and coats welcomed Graham with oily and deferential cordiality. "We are having a big night, sir," he said with the peculiar sibilation of his kind and with his broad, flat hands clasped together. "It is Madam's birthday, sir. Yes sir. You and the gentlemen will enjoy it very much."

Peter and Kenyon followed Graham into the studio. Their curiosity, already stirred by the sight of the men and women in the hall, was added to by the Rembrandt effect of the high, wide room, whose darkness was only touched here and there by curious faint lights. The buzz of voices everywhere and little bursts of laughter proved that there were many people present. As they went in, a powerful limelight was suddenly focused on the center of the room, and into this slid a string of young girls. Led by one who contorted herself in what was supposedly the Egyptian manner, they moved to and fro with bent knees and angular gestures and rigid profiles. Music came out of the

darkness—the music of a string band with cymbals.

"Good Lord!" said Kenyon. "What an amazing mixture of exotic smells!"

"Look out for your money," said Peter with a touch of blunt materialism.

There was insistent demand for an encore. The performance was repeated with the same gusto and relish, but the three men saw nothing of it. Just as the band burst forth again, Kenyon made a long arm, caught the skimpy covering of a girl who was passing and drew her into the alcove where they had found seats.

"Come and cheer us up, Minutia," he said. "We feel like lost souls here."

The girl was willing enough. It was her business to cheer. She stood in front of them for a moment so that the blue light showed her charms. She looked very young and tiny. Fair hair was twisted round her head. She wore a thin, loose Egyptian smock, but her small snub nose and impudent mouth placed her, whatever might be her costume, on Broadway.

She caught sight of Graham. "Oh, hello, kid! So you've come back."

Graham made room for her. He rather liked being recognized. Kenyon would see that he knew his way about. "Yes, here I am again. It's difficult to get the Papowsky dope out of the system."

"Don't see why you should try. It's pretty good dope, I guess." She snuggled herself in between Graham and Kenyon, putting an arm round each. She bent across Kenyon to examine Peter and gave an exaggeratedly dramatic cry of surprise and admiration. "My God! It's a giant!"

"Think so?" said Peter. He would have given a great deal for a pipe at that moment, so that he could puff out great clouds of smoke as a disinfectant.

"A gala night," said Graham.

"Sure. If the police were to make a raid to-night—gee, there'd be a fine list of names in to-morrer's paper!"

"Think they will?" asked Kenyon. "By Jove! I wish they would. Think of seeing these people scuffling like frightened rabbits. It would be epoch-making."

The girl turned a keenly interested eye on Kenyon and looked him over with unabashable deliberation. "You've got a funny kind of accent," she said. "You're a comic. Is this your first visit?"

"Yes. Have you been here long?" Kenyon asked the question carelessly, as though to keep the ball moving. It was, as a matter of fact, the beginning of his plan to disillusionize Graham.

"Ever since it started. Ask the kid—he knows. Don't you, kid?"

"Rather," said Graham.

"I used to be in the chorus, but this is the life."

"I suppose so," said Kenyon. "Variety, gayety, art—but don't you get a little fed up? I mean it must be hopelessly monotonous to be shut up in one place all the time."

"Don't know whatcher mean. Translate that, wont you?"

"He means never getting out," said Graham.

"Never getting out! I don't get you, Steve. Me and my sister get away after the show, same as any other."

"What!" Graham was incredulous. It struck him that the girl was lying for reasons of loyalty to her employer. He knew better.

"Oh, I see!" said Kenyon, leading her on carefully. "You don't live here, then?"

"Live here? Of course I don't. I come about ten o'clock every night and leave anywhere between three and four in the morning—earlier, if there's nothing doing."

"Oh, I thought that the girls here are—well, held up, kept here all the time—prisoners, so to speak."

A shrill, amused laugh rang out. "Oh, cut it out! What's all this dope? Say! you've ben reading white-slave books. You're bug-house—dippy. Why, this is a respectable place, this is. This is the house of art. We're models; that's what we are. We're only here for local color." She laughed again.

KENYON threw a quick glance at Graham's face. He could just see it in the dim light. The boy was listening intently—incredulously. So also was Peter, who had drawn himself into a



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corner and was hunched up uncomfortably.

Kenyon began to feel excited. Everything was going almost unbelievably well. The girl was so frank, so open and obviously spontaneous. It was excellent. "Of course you tell us these things," he said, voicing what he knew was going silently through Graham's mind, "but we know better. We know that you, like that poor little girl Ita Strabosck, are watched and not allowed to get away under any circumstances. Now, why not tell us the truth. We may be able to help you escape too."

Again she laughed. "Oh, say!" she said. "What are you, anyway? Reporters on the trail of a story? I'm telling you the truth. Why not? As for Ita—! Oh-o! She put it all over a boob, she did. She's ambitious, she is. She was out to find an angel—that was her game. She told us so from the first. We used to watch her trying one after another of the soft ones. But they were wise, they were. But at last some little feller fell for her foreign accent and little sobs. She had a fine tale all ready. Oh, she's clever. She ought to be on the stage playing parts. Most of us go round to her place in the daytime and have a good time with some of her men friends. I've not been yet. But from what my sister says, I wouldn't be a bit surprised if she gets her man to marry her. From what she says, he's a sentimental Alick; and oh, gosh! wont she lead him some dance?"

At last Graham broke forth, his face white, his eyes blazing and his whole body shaking as though he had ague. "You're lying!" he shouted. "Every word you've said's a lie!"

The girl, entirely unoffended at this involuntary outburst, bent forward and looked at Graham with a new gleam of intelligence, amusement and curiosity. "My word, I believe you're Mr. Strabosck. I believe you're the boob. Oh, say! come into the light. I guess I must have a look at you."

Graham got up, stood swaying for a moment as though he had received a blow between the eyes and staggered across the room and out into the passage.

"Now he knows," said Kenyon.

"Come on, Peter. We shall have our

work cut out to hold him in. There was blood in his eyes." Utterly ignoring the ribald girl, Kenyon pushed to the door, and found Graham sober, but with his mouth set dangerously, standing in front of the Japanese. "My hat and coat, quick!" he was saying, "or I'll break the place up."

"Steady, steady," said Kenyon. "We don't want a scene here."

"Scene be damned. I tell you something's got to break."

The Japanese ducked into the coat-room.

"Where's Peter?" Graham looked back, expecting to see his brother's head above the crowd: no sign of him!

By accident the limelight, which had been suddenly turned on for a new performance, fell on Peter as he was marching toward the door of the studio. Instantly he found himself face to face with two jovial, good-natured, but rather more than half intoxicated men, who planted themselves deliberately in his way. "Hello," said one. "Where are you going?"

"Out," said Peter.

"No, by jiminy, you're not," said the other. "Stay and keep us company."

"Come on over," added the other. "We're sitting over there with a lovely party, and the ladies want to know you."

"Much obliged," said Peter, trying to edge through, "but I have to go."

There was a burst of laughter. "You're a big chap, but there's two of us, and we want you to stay. Say, what's the hurry, anyhow? By gosh, but it's a relief to see a real man in this place. Join us and have some fun."

They were good fellows and meant well. But Peter's thoughts were concentrated on his brother. He pushed one of them aside. "I have to go," he said. "It's important. Please get out of the way."

There was another good-natured but annoying laugh. "Don't be disagreeable. You've got to stay; that's all there is to it—so come on."

There was only one thing to do, and Peter did it. He heaved his shoulder against one man and sent him flying; then he picked up the other by his collar and the slack of his trousers, hurled him

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into space and made a leap for the door, leaving chaos behind him. Without waiting to get his hat and coat, he made a dash for the elevator, caught it just as it was about to descend and went down to the main floor, disheveled and panting.

Out in the street he saw Kenyon trying to put Graham into a taxicab. Kenyon turned and called out: "Come on, or Papowsky will make it hot for us."

ON his way home from a late evening at one of his clubs, Ranken Townsend caught the name "Papowsky," whose evil reputation had come to his ears. He threw a quick glance at the men who were leaving her place and

saw that one of them was Peter. He drew up and stood in front of the man in whom he thought he had recognized cleanness and excellence, and told himself that he was utterly mistaken.

"So this was your precious business engagement," he said with icy contempt. "Well, I don't give my daughter to a man who shares her with women like Papowsky—so you may consider yourself free. Good night."

And the smile that turned up the corners of Kenyon's mouth had in it the epitome of triumph. All along the line he had won—all along the line.

Peter watched the tall, disappearing figure. He felt as though he had been kicked in the mouth.

The next installment of "The Sins of The Children" will appear in the October Red Book Magazine—on sale September 23rd.

THE HEART OF A MAN

A NEW NOVEL BY HALLIE ERMINIE RIVES

Continued from page 862 of this issue.

stinctively resisted the intoxication, Sevier had been conscious only of blind movement, a frantic flight to escape the unescapable. Yet his whole body was tense; his eye never wavered; his hand was as steady as his chauffeur's. He was sharply conscious of all about him, every sense recording its message unerringly. He felt the wind-flung dust, heard the chatter of the exhaust, grasped acutely at each detail of sight and sound in the reeling panorama through which they passed with such arrowlike swiftness, under a sky that was a wild blue field of silver stars. Yet the governance of the mind, the sole arena in which the intoxicant ravaged and rioted, the logical faculty to which sense-impression is but material, was astray. And at length the intoxication wholly conquered.

With the acknowledged dominance of the sinister thing that held him, the mental turmoil had swiftly stilled. There had come sudden composure—a strange, appalling peace, in which was no appre-

ciation of place or time or fact, but yet a curious exaltation, a sensation of seeing not through a glass darkly, but with a further mental vision which knew no material bars. His mind, untrammelled, ran out along the groove of ready suggestion—as though, by virtue of some significant clairvoyancy, he himself were become both agent and object. He was still Harry Sevier the lawyer, and yet in some weird way he was also the prisoner. He was seeing himself—or his double—walking in manacles under the frowning archway of a jailyard—feeling the keen clippers on his head and the clinging touch of the striped clothes—seeing himself tramping in the lock-step, tin bucket in hand, to mess; his flesh was catching the damp shiver of the cell with its small barred window, and his nostrils dilating to the scent of the jail blanket.

Three hours, four hours—and still no sign. Bob stole a glance behind him. "Wonder what's the matter?" he mut-

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Examine your skin closely tonight!

Whatever is keeping you from having the charm of "a skin you love to touch"—it can be changed.

TOO often we stand back from our mirrors, give our complexions a touch or two of the mysterious art that lies in our vanity cases, and—congratulate ourselves that our skins are passing fair.

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tered. "He sure never did want to go hell-bent-fer-election like this before. Lucky I filled the tank plumb full this morning. She's good for another forty mile, I reckon."

As he withdrew his eyes, he became aware of a red light swinging down into the road—a railway-crossing. He threw himself on the "emergency" lever, and with a grinding roar the brakes took hold. Plunging and shuddering, the car stopped dead, its forward lamps jingling against the warning bar.

WITH the sudden stop Harry lurched forward. And curiously, with the abrupt cessation of motion and roar, the vast, vague distance through which his mind had been shuttling, closed instantly. The baleful intoxication had lifted as it had come. He put a hand to his forehead—what was he doing there?

It was coming back to him. He remembered the straining trial, the hour in his inner office—with the little wall-cabinet! He saw the crowded courtroom, saw himself standing impotent before the bar, saw the despairing face of the man beside him, the puzzled countenances about him, the dim lamps. He heard verdict and sentence. He saw himself turn to gaze into the face of the girl across the courtroom—knew the swift rush of the motor, the blazing arc-lights and that final stab of realization!

His lips tightened to shut back something like a groan, as there rushed upon him a sense of horror, disgust—shame. The Harry Sevier he had been—the Harry Sevier of good repute, of disdain for the intemperate, of brilliant accomplishment and regular habit—was gazing with horrified eyes at the Harry Sevier he had unwittingly become: the slave of the spirit he had so long invoked, who had to-day betrayed his client and sent an innocent man to the wretched cell of a convict!

He spoke. "Bob, where are we?"

The chauffeur stole a quick glance behind him—there was relief in it. "Penitentiary Crossing, sir," he said. "There's the Black Maria." He pointed to one side, where the gloomy vehicle, a wheeled ark with a narrow, barred window set in its rear, waited with its patient mules.

The train was at the crossing now, and the rumble of the brakes swelled to a vibrant screech, the long dotted line of dimly lighted windows shuddering to a stop right athwart the road. A train-man with a lantern jumped down, followed by a couple of passengers. Harry opened the door of the tonneau, and suddenly conscious that he was stiff and aching in every joint, achieved the ground and took a step toward the train.

Two figures just then emerged from the glare. He saw that they were linked together by the wrist, and as the coat of one blew aside, the lights of the motor glinted from a nickel star—the badge of a deputy-sheriff. They had passed him, and the train was moving again to the *chug-chug* of the engine, when the officer turned back, biting the end from a cigar.

"Could you give me a light?" he asked.

"Certainly." Harry took a silver matchbox from his pocket.

The other struck the match, hauling irritably at his lagging prisoner, and the red light, flaring up, for an instant showed the two faces, the sheriff's grim and tenacious, and the one beside it—a white, dogged face, with red-rimmed eyes and a shock of sand-colored hair.

Harry shrank as though at a blow in the face. He drew a sharp breath, for the sight pierced to the excoriated spot that lay like a live coal in his soul. There before him stood his client of that day's trial, on the last lap of his dismal journey, the man whom he, Harry Sevier, had sent there! Back of this man of the law, with his gleaming star, he saw himself standing, the real mainspring of that harsh enginery.

The flare of the match fell. "Well, good night to you," said the deputy-sheriff.

"Hold on," said Harry. "Can a prisoner use money?"

"They're not supposed to, but I reckon money talks as loud in a concrete cell as anywhere else."

Harry had taken some crisp yellow-backs from his pocket, and now he held them out—to the jail-bird. "Here!" he said. "Take this."

The other looked at the bills with a suddenly contorted face—then with a

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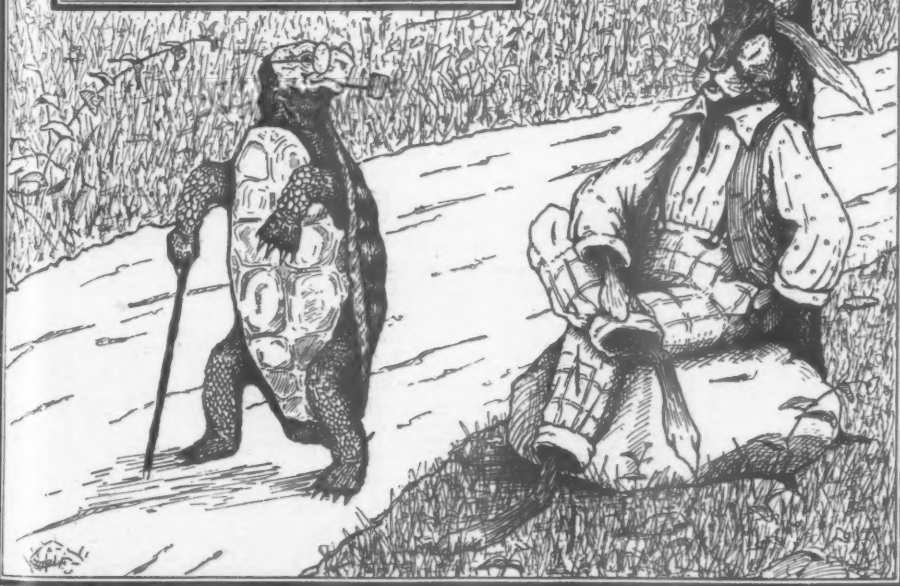
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whirl of his unfettered hand dashed them on the ground. "Keep your money!" he snarled. "I'm a thief—that's what I am now! When I want money, I'll steal it!"

The sheriff gave an exclamation and jerked viciously on the tethered wrist. "Don't you mind, sir," he said. "You mean it well, but this is an ugly one. Lord love you, they'll soon take that out of him over there! Come along, you," he added to the other, pulling him toward the Black Maria; "and if you open your face again like that, I'll give you a lesson!"

Harry stood an instant looking dully after them; then he mechanically picked up the fallen bills, fumblingly replaced them in his pocket and climbed into the motor. He felt his face suddenly hot. In those flung words his judicial mind recognized the indictment. From the little wall-cabinet in his inner office had crept a thing of shame and humiliation to himself. He saw this now suddenly swell and grow—as did the vapor from the fisherman's cruse—to a blighting, tentacled thing, reaching interminably into the future, holding in its coils a human life of pain, of desperate warfare, of social outlawry.

He sat down on the leathern cushions like one in a dream.

"Home, Bob," he said heavily.

CHAPTER IV

THE PRODIGAL

AT Midfields that evening the late moonlight poured a flood of radiance on the wide-columned porch with its climbing roses, where Echo sat on the step, chin in hand, absorbed in her own thought. She was alone. Nancy had slipped off to bed; her mother had retired to her room, and her father to the quiet of the library and his reading.

From the kitchens she could hear the muffled clash of table-silver and the strident voice of Aunt Em'ly, grumbling at Nelson: "Yo'-all hurry erlong wid dem ar fawks, now! Speck ah's gwine wait hyuh all *night*, yo' triffin trash, yo'? Yo' heah me—yo' ain' blind! What yo' 'spose Marse Beve'ly *pay* yo' fo', anyhow?" From far down the road,

beyond the gates, she could hear the faint twang of a guitar and the refrain of strolling, dark voices:

Reign! Reign! Reign-a mah Lawd!
Reign, Marse Jesus, reign!
Reign salvation in-a mah soul,
Reign, Marse Jesus, reign!

These died away with the sharp, eager bark of a dog. Then at length distinguishable sounds faded, and there was only the deep, somnolent peace of the Southern night, with the scent of the roses wreathing the garden with their intense, mystical odor—only the faint stirring of little leaves playing hide-and-seek with their shadows, and the thin, fairy tone-carpet woven by the myriad looms of night insects for near whispers to tread on.

Since that homeward ride, she had had no time to ponder upon the event of the day. At dinner the trial had been touched upon but casually. Now that she was alone, however, it had rushed uppermost in her thought. It was not that Harry Sevier had lost the verdict; but his speech had seemed to her, in the tension of the crisis, with a man's honor and liberty at stake, inconsequential and almost flippant. And in the measure of her disappointment she had realized anew the depth of her regard for him. Again and again she pictured the scene in the courtroom, but each time her thought returned upon itself, baffled and puzzled.

At length, with a long breath that was almost a sigh, she stirred, and rising, passed into the library where the Judge sat in the armchair by his reading-lamp. "You're a disgraceful night-owl," she said, "and I refuse to keep you in countenance any longer."

He smiled at her. "That's right. It's time for beauty-sleep if you and Nancy are off to ride in the morning. Just give me my eyeshade, will you, before you go?"

She brought the green crescent and snapped it on his forehead. "There! you haven't told me how you like my dress to-night. It's a new one."

He looked. "It's beautiful."

She turned about before him. "I do choose well sometimes, don't I?"

For the "Never-Well but Never-Sick"

NOT well enough to enjoy living, yet not sick enough for the doctor—who does not know that dreary, depressing state of "semi-health!" Some of us get it occasionally—"the blues" we call it—others so often that they almost forget what it means to be normal and healthy.

With nerves on edge, digestion uncertain, the mind depressed, our efficiency is reduced day by day. Ambition becomes stunted, our interest in things grows half-hearted. The reason: Our ship of

life carries too much cargo—we must unload or else *get more power*.

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"You do everything well, my dear." In his tone now was a quaint and curious humility which always touched her when she discerned it,—something of utter fondness and dependence,—and she patted his iron-gray hair—one of her characteristic endearments—as she kissed him good night.

UPSTAIRS, Echo opened the door of her room softly. It was hung in blue—that shade which one sees in a Gainsborough ribbon, a Romney sash or a Reynolds sky—and its furniture was of simple white, with large pink dahlias nodding over the chintz window-curtains and chair-cushions. In the dim night-light the triple mirror of the dresser reflected the great four-post bed, in one of whose pillows Nancy Langham's dark head was already buried.

"Is that you, Echo?"

"Yes, it's I. Were you asleep already?"

"Almost," yawned Nancy, a slight, glowing girl of nineteen. "I *shall* be in two shakes of a lamb's tail. Has Chilly come home yet?"

"No, not yet."

"Do you think he's really at the club, Echo?"

"Of course I do."

"Men are so queer!" sighed Nancy drowsily. "We had such a lovely evening—all except Chilly's not being there."

Echo slipped off her gown and drew out the pins from her hair, letting it fall in a shimmering cloud to her waist. Then in the moonlight she drew a deep chair before the open window and began to brush out that wonderful mass of stirring gold that curled and waved about her bare round shoulders. Below her the garden lay, a mass of olive shadows sprinkled with moon-dust and drenched with the dizzying scent of roses and honeysuckle, lapped in the utter quiet of the night—only the swift wings of a night-bird brushed the darker clump of ivy that marked the sundial. A long time she sat there,—the brush parting and smoothing the bronze mesh with long, sweeping movements,—gazing into the whisper-haunted gloom and listening to the measured breathing of the girl behind her.

All at once in the hush there came the

clashing of the gate at the foot of the drive, and jovial good-by's, along with a hilarious voice asseverating that its owner had had "the time of his young life."

She bit her lip. "It's Chilly!" she whispered, with a frowning look over her shoulder.

She listened intently. There was the crunch of an uncertain step on the gravel, the sound of a stumble from the porch—then the slamming of a door.

The dulled sound reverberated through the old house. It roused Nancy, and she sat upright in the drift of silken coverlets, her eyes heavy with sleep. "Is it Chilly?"

"Yes. He has just come in."

"Is he—"

"I'm afraid so, Nancy."

The younger girl caught her breath. "Oh, I hope your father has gone to bed. He's so hard on him!"

Echo turned. "How can he be otherwise?" she said sadly. "It's so often and often it happens, nowadays. Wont you try and influence him? He cares for you, darling!"

Nancy's hands were clasped tight about her knees. She stirred uneasily. "How can I, Echo? A boy has to have a little bit of a good time once in a while. I wouldn't want him to be a molly-coddle! He wont be any the worse for it when he gets older and settles down."

"The worse for it!" The words fell sadly. "Don't you think he is the worse for it already? He's making no progress with his law-study, and he's been two years out of college, now. There's nothing to blame but his drinking—and the company he keeps. What will be the end of it? Oh, Nancy, you *have* a responsibility. Every woman has, with some one man. If women only wouldn't countenance it as they do!"

"But, Echo—you talk as if Chilly was—as if you thought he was doing something disgraceful. Why, he's a gentleman; he *couldn't* be anything but that, no matter what he did!"

Echo came to the bed and sat down beside the other. In her filmy night-gown, wound in the mist of her loosened, gold-shadowed hair, she looked like some ethereal thing in the moonlight.



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"Ah, that's just what so many say! That a gentleman is a gentleman, whether he is drunk or sober! It's not so with other things. Is a gentleman a gentleman whether he lies, or cheats at cards, or not? Isn't there to be any standard, really? Don't you see that there never will be any penalty—as far as drinking is concerned—until women *make* it? Listen, Nancy. The year I came out, I went to a dance—my first big one. There was a boy there who followed me about all over the floor. He wanted me to dance with him, and he was—he could hardly walk. At first I was frightened, but at last I grew angry. I asked a lady why he was not asked to leave the floor. She seemed quite astonished and indignant. 'But,' she said, 'don't you know who he *is*? That's the son of General Moultrie!' It was Cale Moultrie. You know what became of him, don't you?"

"Yes." Nancy's voice was muffled. "But Chilly—"

"Oh, my dear, there was a time when Cale drank no more than the others, and everybody liked him—as they do Chilly. It's coming to be the same with him, I'm afraid. There's no penalty for him yet, because he's Chisholm Allen—because he's Father's son!"

She stopped, caught by the sound of a sob. In another moment her arms were around the frail little body, and the flowerlike face was pressed hard against her breast.

"I don't care if he *is* d-d-dissipated," said Nancy passionately. "I'd rather have him come to me d-d-drunk than any other man sober! He's—he's just Ch-Ch-Chilly, all the same!"

CHAPTER V

THE UNLAIID GHOST

ON the ground floor of the old house all was silent save in the dining-room, where a single electric bulb threw into garish relief the dismantled table with a bowl of fern glowing like a fountain of emeralds against the dark wood. It lighted the Chippendale sideboard, before which Chisholm Allen confronted old Nelson, the butler. A cut-glass de-

canter of sherry was in one hand; the other was alternately fumbling uncertainly with the stopper and pushing back the persuasive fingers of the aged negro. His straw hat was tipped awry; his face was flushed and his eyes unnaturally bright. He was laughing immoderately.

"You old black stick-in-the-mud!" he said. "What's the matter with you? Think *you* own that decanter, eh? Well, you don't, not by a long shot. I do—Chris'mas present from the Duchess. Hope to die if it wasn't. Leggo, you virtuous old chicken-thief, and give me a tumbler!"

"Now, Marse Chilly!" The low voice was deprecating and appealing, and there was love in it too—the deep, changeless affection of the old-time negro for his white master. "*Yo' knows yo' don't want no mo' dat ar. Yo' done had er plenty at dat ol' club downtown. Ef yo' tuck away any mo' now, yo' gwine have er haid lak er rain-bar'l on yo' shouldahs in de maw'nin'! Yo' knows yo' is!*"

Chilly's hand dragged at the black, detaining fingers. "What do *you* know about heads? Take your fool hands away, I tell you! I'm only going to take a couple of swallows."

"*Ah knows dem ar swallows,*" pleaded the old man. "*Yo' go erlong tuh baid. Hit's long pas' midnight. Marse Beve'ly's in de lib'ry.*"

"Oh, bother!" said Chilly irreverently. "He's gone by-by long ago. Shut your face or you'll wake him up."

"*Fo' de Lawd, Marse Chilly!*" stutted the old man, "*Ah heahs him comin' now! Ah sho' does!*"

"You can't bamboozle me!" laughed Chilly. "Old Huckleberry's been snoozing this half 'our! If he does come, you and I'll drink his health. Eh? Wonder what he'd say!"

He was not to be left in doubt, for at the moment the hall-door opened. His father stood on the threshold. He was dressed, and the green eyeshade was on his forehead.

"We will dispense," he said in a tone of quiet hardness, "with a ceremony which, however filial, is somewhat ill-timed. Nelson, I think you needn't wait up any longer."

"Yas, Marse Beve'ly. Yassuh." The old man went to the door, hesitated and came back. "Is yo' sho' yo' don' want nothin' else, Marse Beve'ly?"

"Nothing further, Nelson."

"Yassuh. Good night, Marse Beve'ly. Good night, Marse Chilly." This time he went out, closing the door behind him with exaggerated caution.

"Come now, Judge," said his son, still mirthfully. "There's no Masonic funeral going on in the bungalow, is there? Can't one have a harmless nightcap without being excommunicated?"

His father looked at him from under the green shade with gloomy disapproval. The address did not tend to mend matters; his son was wont to reserve the judicial title for moods of especial mellowness such as to-night's. He noted the flushed face and sparkling eyes, the general air of good-natured recklessness that so clearly spoke the nature of the other's evening's pleasure.

"We'll discuss that to-morrow." He crossed to the wall and laid his hand on the electric switch. "Good night."

Chisholm still smiled without apparent resentment. "I guess you weren't ever as young as I am, Judge, anyway. You seem to think I'm a rotten bad lot just because I like to take a glass now and then and go out with the boys. You drink *your* mint julep, all right enough. And I'll bet whoever you had to dinner to-night took as much as I've had under *my* vest. The only difference is I haven't had any dinner. It does make a difference, I assure you."

His father's hand was still extended to the wall. "I said good night, Chisholm."

Chilly shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, what's the use?" he said listlessly, and went unsteadily out by the rear door.

THE Judge snapped off the switch, and putting out the light in the library, ascended the stair. The hard look had deepened on his face. As he gazed at that nonchalant epitome of ribaldry, he had thought of other men who had so often been grouped about the table in that room—men of tempered habit, of standing and achievement. His own son had contempt for such company. It

bored him. He preferred to "go out with the boys" and to come home in the small hours—as he had to-night! So he was thinking as he entered the room above. There he stopped in surprise, for across the threshold stood his wife. She was in her nightgown, over which she had thrown a robe of silk-crêpe with lace at the neck and wrists. Her face showed a heightened color, and her lips were trembling. He drew forward a chair.

"I thought you were asleep long ago," he said.

She declined the seat with a gesture. "I heard your voices. What did you say to Chilly?"

"I said good night," he answered heavily. "That was about all."

Her lip curled. The glance she gave him was critically cold. When she married Beverly Allen, she had loved him—in so far as she had been capable of loving. To her, marriage had meant the assumption of woman's predestined place in the social fabric, the inevitable change of habit which time brings to all, with its widened social orbit and opportunities. She had been drawn to him by every instinct of selection which took count of name, social standing, worldly endowment and mental equipment; but there had been behind it no throb of maidenly impulse, no thrill of the great current that feeds the romance of the world.

The one point at which life for Mrs. Allen caught and focused had been the son, whose misconduct stood so sharply out against the spotless Allen name. He was her one weakness, her love for him an unreasoning passion that had swayed her from his birth. To her his transgressions showed as venial, his delinquencies as but the forgivable errors of youth. The few instances in which he had been openly called to task by his father had been sharpened in the latter's memory by her resentment. But on none of these occasions had her husband seen her so moved as now. He did not know that for many minutes she had stood on the dark landing listening to the murmurous voices, and that now she resented what seemed to her a deliberate evasion. She spoke with slow, even point:

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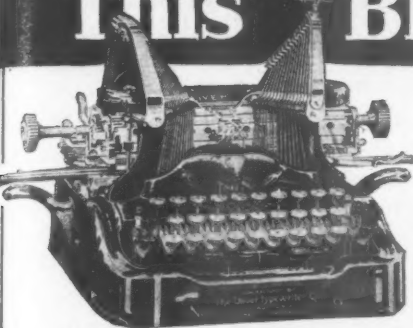
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surprise. Was he saying good night also?"

Under the unaccustomed anger of her voice the Judge's pale face flushed. He took off the eyeshade and set it on the table, as he replied evenly:

"Chilly is not himself to-night, Charlotte. Does it matter particularly what he said?"

BENEATH his voice now there was a kind of subterranean compassion, a note almost of entreaty, as though in this trouble that touched them both he could have wished to comfort her, if, indeed, she had made that possible.

She made an involuntary movement—not a sign that a chord had been touched, but rather a mark of agitation. Chilly was the one subject upon which she could not bring to bear the tempered reason which otherwise marshaled her even life. It seemed to her now that she was being thrust aside, in the interest of some new plan of discipline and coercion. She turned swiftly on her husband.

"I suppose you think it should make no difference to me!" Her eyes blazed. "You are so sure you understand Chilly! You,—his father,—have you ever really known him all his life? Does he ever come to you when he is in trouble or needs advice?"

Her voice held a bitter sarcasm, and again the flush swept up the Judge's pale face. But his voice was emotionless as he said: "Chilly never felt the need of advice from anyone. He goes his own sweet way."

"That is just it!" she said. "You set yourself so far above him. You have such a contempt for his pleasures and so thoroughly despise the company he keeps. Suppose he has a taste for liquor? He is still a gentleman, I believe. But you, with your solemn rectitude and your touch-me-not self-righteousness — *you* would drive him to the very people and places he ought to keep away from!"

He stared at her. "I have never regarded my repugnance to his habits as inducing him to further excesses," he said slowly. "Nor have I set myself up as a preacher. Perhaps I have not understood him as—you do. I only know that his ways are not my ways. He has

had every advantage that education and environment can confer. He is older than I was when I began practice. But what is he making of his life? He thinks of nothing but playing fast and loose at country-houses and loafing at the club and acting the fop and the fool generally!"

Her shaking hand was plucking at the lace at her throat. His every word had been a live coal laid to her resentment. "Is that the worst you can say of him?" she asked. "Can't you call him sot or black-leg?"

"Not yet." He was feeling now a dull anger at her scorn, at her persistent disapproval. The throb of sympathy he had first felt had been frozen by her icy reproach. "There are other things I wish to be able to say of my son. I want him to be more than a decorative philanderer. I want him to be a man—one to whom men may look for manliness, and women for honor!"

She had grown pale to the lips. "'And women for honor!'" she repeated. "As I looked to—you!"

HE had flung out his arm with a characteristic gesture, but at her last words it suddenly stiffened and remained, as if it had been frozen in the air. Slowly it dropped at his side as he stared at her with ashen face—a look of shocked and disconcerted inquiry. For the exclamation, as at the swift slash of a blade, had torn away a veil, woven of time and habit, and laid bare an old wound. For twenty years by tacit consent this covered thing of the past had never been acknowledged by any word or deed between them. Now a single sentence had laid it bare, quick and quivering and mutually confessed. They had been married twenty-two years, and if in that early period he had discerned any lack in her, he had given her no reproaches. On her part, she had fulfilled what she esteemed her whole duty and in her own mind stood blameless. And he had had his profession. But in the end starved nature had reasserted itself. There had come to him a passion, swift and terrible while it lasted, to which he had surrendered wholly—till death swept it from him.

CHAPTER VI

THE JUDGE SITS IN THE LAMPLIGHT

The gall and wormwood had been sweetened then by the birth, in merciful coincidence with that loss, of his twin children. He had thought the episode buried forever from sight and hearing, but a later chance had discovered it to his wife, and in her own immaculateness she had been able neither to forget nor to forgive. It had made no difference in her life before their world. Cold and perfect and correct, she had held her way, but from the day when she had faced him with his secret in her hand, their hearts had been strangers to one another. He had climbed high, and she had risen with him. And in twenty years no word had fallen from her lips to open that old tomb—till to-night when the heavy doors swung ajar at the echo of that one exclamation.

"As I looked to—you!" There it was—the old ghost, called up to haunt his present as it had waylaid his past! His hand mechanically fumbled for the discarded eyeshade and adjusted it as he slowly said:

"I have never counted myself a pattern, Charlotte—least of all for my own son."

She caught the note of pain and weariness now in his voice, and something new and unaccustomed stirred for one brief moment in her heart. She had struck harder than she had intended. But she had lost control at a critical moment, and old bitterness, that had never been tintured with the sweetness of charity and forgiveness, had sharpened her tongue. Now his shocked white face smote her with a sense of self-reproach. For a fleeting second words trembled on her tongue that might have dissolved the icy barrier between them. But the golden second passed.

"That is generous," she said with a distant laugh. "No doubt Chiffy will profit by experience, if not by precept. Shall you be at court to-morrow?"

"Yes," he answered. "I have a hearing."

"You will prefer the horses, then," she said, turning to the door. "I will take the electric for my shopping. Good night."

He opened the door for her. "Good night," he said.

IN the silence of the room the Judge stood for a moment with his hand at his lips, as though he tasted blood. The summer night outside was very still. The curtain before one of the windows swayed gently in the air, and from the acacia trees on the lawn he could hear the sleepy twitter of an oriole. He turned off the light and went into the hall. There at one side stood the white, paneled door of his wife's room. It was shut. It came to him that it stood for a perfect symbol of that cold immaculateness of hers which had so long denied him the living bread of sympathy. She could forgive anything in her son, but nothing in her husband. For twenty long years they two had dwelt as if at opposite ends of the Milky Way, and it seemed to him suddenly monstrous, whatever the cause, whosoever the fault, that they, being man and wife, should yet be so far apart.

He went slowly down the stair, his hand shaking a little, slipping along the polished banister. The dim night-light made the lower hall a place of ghostly shadows. He reentered the library, moved to the table and turned on the reading-lamp. Then, lifting it to the limit of its silken cord, he threw the electric glow upon the canvas that hung above the mantel, studying it intently.

"Mine!" he muttered, with a sort of fierce satisfaction. "Mine, every inch—mine, not Charlotte's! My blood gave you that curve of brow and those full lips and that deep, dark blue of eye—they are of my side, not of hers! You, at least, belong to me!"

He returned the lamp to its place, and turning, cast his glance at the little Italian desk in the corner. His lips trembled. At that desk she had sat—the woman knowledge of whom had sharpened the sword of his wife's never-dying disdain, the woman who had come into his life too late! He thought of their meetings, few enough, indeed. How often he had wondered how life would have turned for him, if at the end she had listened to his desperate pleading,

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that would have flung all to the winds, social standing, reputation, career, friends, honor, all! If she had said "Yes" to that wild letter he had sent her—the one to which she had vouchsafed no reply—which might have been written in his very heart's blood!

He looked again at the painted portrait of Echo, in her splendid youth and clean heritage: the answer was there.

He sat down before the little desk, stretched his arms upon it and bowed his head upon them. "You were right, Eleanor," he sighed. "You were right! But somehow it's been so long!"

HE felt a fluttering touch upon his hair and started up. There before him on the desk lay a faded leaf of paper—a page closely written over in twirly, dim writing. He lifted it, held it to the light, his nostrils catching a scent wraith-frail and delicate, like a dead pansy's ghost—

No—no—no! Why did you write it? Why did you put it into words? For now I must keep it always. I cannot destroy it. You knew I would not—could not—let you do what you beg me to! Never, never! I am not so mad. Nor are you, really. It is not your best self speaking in this letter. Some time—

His gaze became fixed. He gave a hoarse cry—a mist was before his eyes. He snatched at the top of the yellowed sheet—it was dated twenty years before, and the handwriting, how familiar! He laid the leaf flat in the lamplight and read it through, with every nerve throbbing to a memory that had started afresh, as distinct as though days, not years, had sifted their dust upon it:

Some time you will thank me—will think of this only as a ghastly indiscretion from which you were caught away in time. We do not make the world we live in, and it is a thousand times stronger than we are. No, if we play the game, we must stick to the rules. To think of overstepping that boundary, in such a desperate fashion, gives my fastidious sense a strange recoil—something like that curious shame and confusion that associates itself with a dream in which one finds oneself scantily clad in the midst of wondering strangers! No—no! I do not think I shall send this letter—but perhaps I may at the end. For I am going away. I sail to-morrow. Shall I see you again—ever—ever? What will you think—

That was all. It broke off abruptly, as though the writer had laid it aside, never to be finished.

In the silent library, the Judge looked at that mute witness as at one risen from the dead. Twenty years of absence and silence—twenty years out of his ken, save to the thriving memory! How long the hand that had penned those lines had been dust; yet the poor symbols of ink and paper persisted to confront him now! How had the sheet come to be on that desk that she had bequeathed him? It had not lain there a moment before.

He brought the lamp and examined the desk attentively, pulling out every tiny drawer, sounding each carved partition, twisting and tugging at every projecting portion of the ornamentation. With a thin metal paper-knife he explored each warp and crevice. But his search was fruitless. If the leaf had slipped from some crack,—loosened, perhaps, by the fall of the brass bowl upon it that day,—the old desk kept its secret.

A strange feeling stole over him, the feeling of mystery that comes to one with some sudden apposition of incident that thrills, with a sense of an overpowering meaning in a circumstance in itself banal and trivial. Something of her proud and passionate spirit she had etched into those lines. Might it be that that spirit, somewhere in the great void, reached out to him through this silent witness—to say that love does not wholly die?

He gently spoke her name. "Eleanor! You forgive me for writing—that. If you hadn't, you wouldn't have sent me this desk when you—died, away over there in Florence! So I've got your letter at last."

He sighed again, and groping for his big chair, sat down, with the sheet of paper spread out upon his knee.

ON the upper floor Mrs. Allen tapped lightly on Chilly's door, and when there was no answer, opened it softly and entered. At the whisper of his name he started up in bed.

"Duchess!" he exclaimed.

The pet name, as always, touched her. It was a perennial tribute to that stateliness and dignity which she had made her own. She came to him, and he





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caught her hand and held it to his lips. "You shouldn't have come," he chided. "You'll take cold."

"I heard your father talking to you," she whispered. "You—you know what he dislikes so. Why can you not be—discreet?"

Chilly moved uneasily: "Oh, I know," he said. "But I can't always be giving an imitation of a Quaker meeting! I'm not a child."

"You must not anger him," she said. "I—for my sake, I wish you would be more careful."

He patted her hand. "All right, Duchess! I'll mind my *p's* and *q's*. But you must go back to bed now. Don't you worry about me."

She bent down and kissed him on the forehead before she glided from the room.

CHAPTER VII

ARROWS OF DESIRE

"**H**ERE is the new rose," said Echo. "Its name is the Laurent Carle."

Cameron Craig looked—at her, not at the blossom. She was in simple white, and as she stood there in the perfumed garden, vivid, elemental, tuned to the wonder and passion of living, her slim figure outlined against the dark green shrubbery and her face and gold-bronze hair touched with the slanting sunlight, she seemed herself some great, rare, golden flower in a silver sheath. Lines he had somewhere read sprang into his mind:

Bring me my bow of burning gold,
Bring me my arrows of desire—

Contained man that he was, Craig caught his breath at the sudden leap in him of the thing that had been covered and hidden there so long, something fine and keen as flame, that set his habitually cool blood beating under his eyelids.

"It was not the rose," he said. "I had another reason in asking you to come here."

"Yes?" Her voice was evenly inquiring.

"It was to ask you if you will marry me."

She took a quick step backward; a look of amaze had sprung to her face. "I?" she exclaimed. "You want me to—marry you?"

"Yes. Is there anything strange in that?"

She looked away. In all her thoughts of the man before her, there had not lurked this possibility. She had been bred among youth who, whatever their other vices, maintained a chivalric ideal of womankind which excluded fast and loose conduct; and the whispers that clung about Cameron Craig—set, as they were, over against his force and undeniably brilliant attainments—had lent her opinion of him a certain cold contempt. And now here he was—he of all men!—saying this to her! And it was no hasty impulse: she read that in the steady, confident eyes, the hard, heavy jaw, the steadfast, deep-lined face.

She felt his waiting gaze. "No," she answered slowly. "Perhaps it is not strange. It is only that the unexpected seems so." She looked at him curiously.

"Why did you ask me—to-day?"

"The opportunity came," he said. "It must have, sooner or later."

"So you have intended for some time to say this to me?"

"Since I first met you, a year ago," he answered. "You have the two things that I want—as I have their complements."

She considered this a moment. "Forgive me," she said then, "but I am a very curious person—as well, it seems, as a very blind one. Would you mind telling me what are those two qualities that you imagine I possess, which you value so highly?"

"Breeding, first," he replied, "and all that it implies. You represent a stock."

She nodded gravely. "And the other desideratum?"

"Beauty. You are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen."

"And—the complements of these things, that you possess?"

"Money," he answered. "And place in the world—the accessories which a woman like you must have if she would really live. I think you don't doubt that my wife shall have these things."

She shook her head. "Not in the least.



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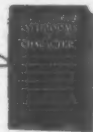
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Indeed, I am sure she will. But you see, Mr. Craig, I happen to be not at all the sort of person you think I am—the kind you wish to marry."

"I'll risk that!" he flung at her.

"The proof is that you ask me—as you have. The things you have to offer seem overwhelmingly attractive to you, no doubt, but I'm afraid they mean much less to me." He could not see the look that was in her face now, for her head was turned away. "I have no longing for money. I could be contented in a mountain lean-to, with morning-glories instead of an orchid conservatory. I could cook my own meals on a gas-stove and live in one room over a hardware store—with the man I loved. I don't care particularly for what you call 'place,' either. I could be happy enough on a prairie—with the man I loved. But love must be there, Mr. Craig."

"Do you doubt my love for you?" he asked.

"You had not cited it," she rejoined calmly. "You spoke of money first—"

"Because I have lived long enough to know that it is the paramount requisite in most women's eyes."

"Your estimate of me by the mass was flattering," she said with gentle satire. "Have you been so busy making this wonderful money of yours that you think it can take the place of everything?"

HE made an abrupt, almost angered gesture. "Surely you know money means—has meant—nothing to me!" he exclaimed. "I am rich, yes. I dare say I could buy and sell almost anyone you know. But it was never the main thing. It was *winning* that counted. It was the game, and money was only the counters. I played to win, and I have won. And wealth was a stepping-stone to other things."

His voice had subtly altered, and he drew closer to her where she stood, moveless and straight against the dark foliage, her gaze averted. "Then—I met you! I have known many women, but they have been nothing, less than nothing, to me! Business has been the only thing that really counted. But since I met you, the whole world has been changing for me. Even my work isn't the main thing

to me any more. The main thing is *you!*"

She lifted her eyes, wide with the swift sense of, the unexpected—touched now with an odd, disquieting prescience. His voice was no longer the cold, even voice of the Cameron Craig she had known. There was passion in it. She saw his big hand tremble.

"There has never been a day or hour since then that I have not wanted you! You have entered into my blood and my brain, and the want of you has colored all I have thought and done! If this is love, then I love you—Echo, Echo!"

She shrank perceptibly at the name on his lips. "Stop!" she said. "The love you talk of must be mutual. I do not—care for you in that way. I never could!"

"That makes no difference to me!" he protested. "I know what I want—I always have. And I want you."

"No," she said, "it is not the real *me* that you want; but we can pass that by. The important fact is that you have offered your last price, and the bid is declined."

He looked at her with a sudden flash in his eyes. "Do I deserve that?" He had grown pale to the lips.

"Yes," she answered, "you do. I have told you that I should never love you. Yet that means less than nothing to you. You have apparently not considered my possible love as a requisite in the case. It is 'breeding' you want, and beauty—and for that you make your offer. You propose purchase, not exchange, Mr. Craig. Well, I am not for sale!"

He flushed to his hair—a dark, heavy red. He appeared to be controlling himself by a fierce effort. "Don't answer me now," he said. "Let me speak to you again later."

"I have answered you," she replied, "once and for all. You will please consider it final."

A whirl of what seemed almost rage shook him; with a single stride he reached her and seized both her hands. "Is there—another man?" There was what startled her now in the harsh, hard voice.

She stiffened. "Well," she said, "—and if there is?"

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At the chill quiet of her voice all the vicious strength and intolerance of the man blazed out. "You are right!" he said savagely. "It could make no difference to me! I will not take your answer—do you understand? In time you will give me a different one. I have waited for other things, and I have had them in the end. I can wait for you!"

He released her hands—so violently that she fell back a step. Then, while she stood regarding him in shocked and indignant amaze, summoning all her forces to meet this fury that had both astonished and repelled her, his face swiftly changed. The flush of anger ebbed; the flash died in his eyes.

Once again his accustomed self, with the steady, confident eyes and swing of shoulder, he drew aside to let her pass and followed her along the box-bordered path to the piazza.

AS they entered the blue parlor, a lady in modish black-and-white rose from her seat with Mrs. Allen and Nancy.

"Well, Echo," she said, "I thought you never *would* appear. I just ran in to remind you that you and Nancy promised to come to my little dinner to-night at the Farm. I've asked some of the youngsters to come for a little dance afterward." She smiled a brilliant recognition to the heavy figure behind her.

"Mr. Craig!" she exclaimed. "So you are in town! How nice it would be of you to come too. Or do you find country-club gayeties too stale and unprofitable?"

He bowed over her hand. "My dear Mrs. Spottiswode!" he said. "This is my lucky day! I shall be delighted!"

CHAPTER VIII

THE THRUST

THE Farm, as the country-club was popularly known to its habitués, was a long, low structure on the edge of the southern suburb, set in a grove of walnut trees facing a little lake. With its golf-links and tennis-courts and its ball-room, which formed an L at one side, it was the favored resort of both the frivolous and athletic; its monthly dances were the gayest of the season's informal

functions, and on Saturday evenings its row of little dining-rooms, which looked out on a gentle slope of shrubbery and graveled walks pricked out with paper lanterns, were favorite resorts for small dinner-parties.

Mrs. Spottiswode united with her popular qualities as a chaperon the talent of a hostess whose dinners were apt to have a pleasurable sprinkling of youth and sobriety. To-night the dozen of the younger set found sufficient foil in the fashionable rector of St. Andrews, in clerical dress of irreproachable cut relieved only by the tiny amethyst cross that swung upon his waistcoat; in Senator Peyton, party-whip at Washington, and one of the State's distinguished citizens, with piercing, sword-gray eyes under brows as black as midnight; and finally in Cameron Craig.

As Echo Allen had said to her father, the latter was not "one of them." The phrase to her had been an instinctive expression of that subtle sense of caste that had been born in her, springing from long lines of gentle ancestors that linked back beyond the days of the Old Dominion. But the distinction lay deep in the mental formula of the man: it was not to be perceived in externals. To-night, in his faultless evening dress, with his keen, strong face and assured manner, he had an air even of distinction that well became him, and the instant's painful embarrassment that Echo felt as her hand touched his in their first greeting yielded quickly to an unwilling admiration of his poise and control. If that flare of passion in the garden had left its traces, they had been successfully covered. He was once more the Cameron Craig she had known—till yesterday.

But beneath that unruffled exterior, Craig's every pulse was in tumult. At table he found himself opposite Echo. The decorations were red roses, and in a ruby gown with a single rose in the coil of her tawny hair, she seemed to him an inherent part of the scheme, a ruby pendant to the rich, shimmering setting. There had been many women to whom he had been passingly attracted—his tastes had been catholic enough in that regard! But he had never seen one whom

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he had wished to marry. He had spoken truly when he said that the women he had known had really meant nothing to him. His licenses had been but incidents after all. They had not ministered to the mental side of his nature, whereas this passion had taken swift and complete possession. As he saw her now in the soft light of the candles, he felt open wide within him an abyss that thronged quick with distempered imaginings. There was another man! She had not denied it. And with the thought there grew in him a slow, cold hatred and determination.

YET Craig's face, as Echo glanced across the roses, betrayed no sign of disquiet. He was apparently listening amusedly to the small-talk of his partner, Nancy Langham, in a gown of pale gauze that made her look like a small, eager tiger-lily caught in a cloud. In the interstices of conversation Echo could catch whiffs of her laughing nonsense:

"Yes. Dr. Custis is the rector of St. Andrews. I've been instructed *not* to ask him if he is related to Martha Washington. The man beside Mrs. Spottiswode is Richard Brent; he is *The Herald*, and a power in the community, I believe. Mrs. Spottiswode's wearing a new Marcel wave; it costs a lot, but they say it's guaranteed to last six months. And to think," she sighed, "that Melissa, my maid, at home, spends a dollar a week trying to have her wool ironed *straight*! The man with the goatee, who looks so Spanishy, is Mr. Horace Leighton, the New York artist who is doing the mural paintings for the new City Hall here."

"So there isn't anyone here who isn't anybody!" Craig observed.

"Only me," she said. "The reason I'm asked is because I'm so frivolous. I'm supposed to offset the feast of reason with bubbles and froth."

"At any rate," remarked the Senator, "seriousness is not to fall in arrears. Down at the other end they have actually got to politics."

Echo followed his glance. Their hostess was holding a glass of wine between her eye and the candlelight, so that a

bright crimson ray lay on her pretty face. It was the Rector who was speaking:

"As for myself, I'm afraid I'm a friend to all the old, hackneyed arguments. 'If meat maketh my brother to offend—' you know." He pointed to his wineglass, which, with the arrival of the soup, he had turned upside-down. "You see I am consistent."

"Politics?" queried Echo. "It seems to be only teetotalism."

"Ah," the Senator answered, "but it's coming to be the same thing, nowadays."

"One understands the individual objection on moral grounds," said Mrs. Spottiswode. "That's a matter of personal belief and conscience. And the Church must be above criticism—must take the sterner course. But for those of us who *don't* think it wrong, the other arguments seem so—so local. I suppose drinking does keep the negroes from doing as much work as they might, but it's hard on the rest of us to have to cut our cloth by the farmer's pattern! We here, for example, at this table, are to go without our sauterne because the farmer has trouble in getting in his tobacco."

"Exactly," agreed the Rector. "The greatest good of the greatest number. And isn't that true democracy, after all? But of course the agricultural problem is the least of it—there are the figures of poverty and crime. The two are twin-brothers, of course. And drink is the father of them both. Will, character, determination—a man with these may overcome the habit. But these are just the qualities that men in the mass lack. When a weak man falls, our system keeps him down. I once heard Thomas Malcoln—everyone here knows of him and his work, I presume—say that for the average drunkard to reform with a saloon on every corner is about as easy as to hoist oneself out of hell by one's bootstraps. I'm inclined to think he is right. And I never saw a drunkard yet—a real Simon-pure drunkard. I mean; not a mere sophomoric tippler—who wouldn't jump at the chance to reform if he could. But he has no more chance of winning out now than a gambler against loaded dice." He paused, with a little gesture.

"But then," he added, "the modern political movement for prohibition has made everyone familiar with the basic arguments."

TREADWELL, spruce young corporation attorney and cotillon leader, looked up interestedly from the other end of the table; the hostess' fan had begun to flutter a sign of agitation. For Cameron Craig's affiliations with the great Trust were well-known, though presumably not to the clergyman, who had met him for the first time that evening. Craig, however, seemed quite unconscious of personal implications.

"Do you seriously think, sir," he asked, with the faintest trace of irony, "that the statistics of crime would be materially lowered in your State if it went 'dry' next year?"

"I do," replied the Rector with emphasis. "And not only lowered. They would be practically wiped out. There wouldn't be enough left to constitute an item in the appropriation for public printing."

"Naturally, however," Craig observed, "as the State has always been 'wet,' exact data is lacking to assist one's speculations."

"On the contrary," said the other, "every jail furnishes them. I think," he went on, turning now to Treadwell, "that it is the experience of every criminal lawyer that liquor, in some phase or other, has been back of the larger proportion of cases he is called on to defend."

The young man nodded. "I never had any experience in criminal cases," he said, "but I should think you were not far wrong. What do you say, Brent?"

"I agree with you," the journalist answered, "but my view of course is a superficial one. It is a pity Harry Sevier isn't here; we should have got a valuable opinion."

"You may be gratified, then," said the hostess. "Though Mr. Sevier couldn't come to dinner, he will be here for the dancing."

The Senator spoke. "Sevier! I heard him in court yesterday."

"So did I," commented Nancy, aside.

"I gave up an auction-bridge for it, and I wish I hadn't. It wasn't exciting at all."

Mrs. Spottiswode looked relief—at last the talk had shifted to safe ground. "He lost the case, I hear," she said. "I wonder what was the matter. Wasn't he in good form?"

The Senator looked thoughtful. "In one way, yes," he replied judiciously. "I confess, though, I had rather expected something different, but just what, I scarcely know."

Nancy turned her small, piquant face. "I know. We all expected Mr. Sevier to do what he has done so often—but didn't to-day. Oh," she exclaimed almost angrily, "while he was talking along, like a machine, I could have shaken him!"

"That *would* have furnished the sensation!" said Treadwell. "And I should think it might have had its effect on the jury, too. Juries *can* be intimidated. I wish you had tried it."

She made a little face at him across the nodding roses and then turned more earnestly to her partner. "I don't know anything about court matters or criminal trials, but from where I sat I could see the man he was defending. He looked so hopeless and—scared! I wanted to stand up and scream across the room: 'Can't you *see*? Look at the poor thing there! Make the jury *feel*!' You were thinking the same thing too, Echo; I could see it in your face."

Echo lifted her eyes. In the candle-light her cheek held a rising flush. She looked across at the Rector. "What do you think, Dr. Custis?" she asked evenly.

He responded promptly. "Perhaps the explanation isn't so far afield. I presume the man had confessed to him, and Sevier knew he was guilty."

Echo was conscious of a wave of relief at an explanation so simple and credible. It had never occurred to her to question the accuracy of other verdicts. Harry had won in the past. Each had seemed to her the triumph of a just cause over a baleful combination of circumstances, the brilliant freeing of truth and innocence from entangling error and maleficent scheming. But if this man were guilty and Harry had known it

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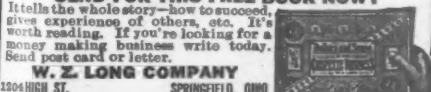
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beyond question, what other outcome had been possible? At the moment she saw in that even, cold presentation of the courtroom only the conscientious determination of the lawyer, who, as the law prescribed, stood by his client to demand that Justice, if she must exact her penalty, prove conclusively every jot and tittle of her ground.

Craig's eyes had been regarding her steadily. With the spreading of that flush upon her cheeks a covert, laughing allusion that had come to his ear on the courthouse steps on the day of the trial darted to his mind. A cool, keen certainty rushed through him. Sevier! Fool that he was, not to have thought of him before! This young *flaneur*,—and drunkard!—this petty trifler with his profession! Was that white indignation of the garden, this vivid flush, for *him*? He leaned forward; his heavy voice, intense and well-modulated, addressed the clergyman:

"An interesting hypothesis, but the implication seems hardly safe. A lawyer's responsibility to his client is a very grave one. He owes none toward the Commonwealth—the State's attorney takes care of that. Any less conventional view should appeal to a lawyer, I think, as dangerous and uncalled-for."

"What do you fancy was responsible for Sevier's method of defense in this case?" asked the Rector.

THERE was an instant of blank silence. The conversation had absorbed the lesser talk, and other voices were hushed. Craig's look was set upon the long, oval damask with its glistening silver baskets of brilliant fruit, its leaf-thin glasses with languid beads rising in their liquid amber, its knots of fern and bonbons. His big fingers were twisting the stem of a goblet. When he spoke, it was as though he had not heard the question.

"I attended a trial once," he said, "at a frontier town in the far Southwest, a border community where procedure is very primitive. The man was charged with murder. He was a schoolmaster, I believe, and in a quarrel with some local bully or other, had killed him. I was in the place on some land-business and

went to the trial for mere amusement. The whole neighborhood was there. Both men, it appeared, had been in their cups, and self-defense seemed an adequate plea. Acquittal was regarded as fairly certain—the more so as the district attorney was the bosom friend of the accused man, and everybody knew it. There was almost no attempt at evidence, which didn't seem surprising under the circumstances, and the State made the baldest farce of its cross-examination. The real interest came after a rather long recess that preceded the final speeches. The prisoner's counsel was a young man with a rough, direct address that caught the people. He had them pretty well with him, too, and when he sat down there seemed very little reason why the jury should even leave the box. The speech had been a fairly long one, and as it had grown dark, candles had been brought in and set about—two on the judge's desk and some on the tables."

Echo repressed a start. It came to her suddenly that there was a significance in what he was saying—a suggestion that a quick clairvoyant sense told her was principally for her. In the few words he had, with apparent unintention, sketched the actual scene in the courtroom of the day before, and while reversing its elements, was picturing, in unfamiliar guise, its identical situation. She felt her face slowly harden, and turned her profile toward him, her hand playing with a fern beside her plate.

"During the whole speech the district attorney had sat in his chair, with his chin in his collar and his eyes closed, never moving. When his turn came he didn't rise; in fact, it was clear that he had been asleep. A laugh went round, and the sheriff put a hand on his shoulder and shook him. He got up, looking confused, and while he blinked at the candles, some one in the audience called out: 'Never mind, old man. If you can't make a speech, recite a poem.' It was curious, but the remark seemed to give him a clue, and he began to recite Hood's 'Eugene Aram.'"

CRAIG paused a moment and sipped from his wineglass. All at the table were leaning forward intently. Tread-

well was frowning at his plate. No one spoke; but a fork, dropped from Nancy Langham's fingers, rattled against the cloth.

"It was a strange sight," went on Craig, "and one I have always remembered. You must picture the crowded courtroom, the gloom, the flaring candles, and the whole uncanny episode, to realize the effect that was produced. The man was by nature a marvelous actor—he would have made his fortune on any stage. At first it seemed as if he didn't know quite where he was, but then the ballad itself gripped him, and he rendered it, acting each line, as I never heard it before or since. I had never realized what was in that poem. Very few there, I suppose, had ever heard it in their lives, and they listened in a fascinated silence while he rolled it out to the last line:

"Two hard-faced men set out from Lynn,
Through the rain and heavy mist,
And Eugene Aram walked between
With gyves upon his wrist."

He paused again. "Oh, finish!" gasped Nancy Langham. "I don't like that story. What then?"

"When he ended, he walked out of the courtroom without waiting for the verdict."

Echo's head turned toward him. "They found him guilty!" exclaimed Mrs. Spottiswode.

"Yes."

"And you say the district attorney was his best friend?" asked the artist.

"So I was told."

"And yet wanted to convict him?"

Craig shook his head. "No, I didn't say that."

"Then what," inquired the Rector, "do you take it inspired him to such an extraordinary action?"

"Oh," said Craig, and as he spoke, for the first time he looked full at Echo. "It all came out afterward. He didn't realize what he was doing. He was drunk."

FOR an instant Echo's breath stopped.

In the unexpected dénouement she had guessed, as at a lightning-flash, Craig's real purpose. Sharply, baldly introduced, the tale stood forth intrusive and malicious, an implied slur upon a man who was not present to refute it. Her whole being flooded with fierce resentment, mingled with an angry amaze that of all there, no one else seemed to have caught the insinuation. To the rest it had been at most a *gaucherie*, a parallel which, if perhaps not felicitous, had been without significance and would be readily forgotten. Therein lay the added sting, that Craig had so accurately judged the outcome. He had guessed how it stood with her and Harry Sevier, and counting on her keener sensitiveness where the latter was concerned, had barbed his shaft for her alone!

The next instant, however, the tension broke with everyone, seemingly, talking at once. From this babble the Senator emerged with a negro story about a trial with "exterminating circumstances," which brought a ripple of laughter, and presently the hostess rose.

The room opened upon the ballroom; from the farther end already came the squeak of tuning violins, and beyond this spread the invitingly cool piazzas, now beginning to fill with filmy gowns that showed pallidly against the evening dusk, where the bouquet of masculine cigars mingled with the dewed scent of shrubbery. Here in the increasing numbers, unobserved as she thought, Echo stepped down onto the cool, dark turf and following one of the little meandering, bush-bordered paths, came to a rustic bench over which a paper lantern threw flickering rose-colored shadows. On this she sat down, struggling to regain her lost composure and grateful for the sense of quiet and the cool suspiration of the water.

In another moment, however, the silence was broken. A step sounded on the path, and she looked up to see Craig standing before her.

The next installment of "The Heart of a Man" will be in the October issue of The Red Book Magazine, on the news-stands September 23rd. In it, Echo Allen faces a decision which must change the entire course of her life.

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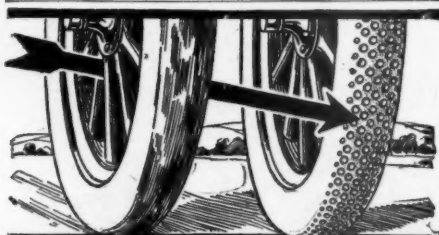
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A M A N ' S M A N

A NOVEL BY PETER B. KYNE

Continued from page 926 of this issue.

knowing glances. They nodded. The patient was already delirious—a bad sign.

"Hey, Doc," the stricken man called. They bent over him. "Send—cablegram to Billy Geary—tell him—come home—before that thousand—spent—money—my pocket."

"Yes, I hear you," the nurse said soothingly. "And the address?"

"Calle de Concordia, Nineteen, Buenaventura, Sobrante."

"Say it again," the nurse urged him. "Spell it." Poor girl! She was a native of St. Louis. If Jack Webster had mentioned Ossawatimic or Canandaigua, he would not have been called upon to go into details and waste his strength. He gasped and wet his lips; she bent to get the message:

"Damn that duck," he whispered. "She had a green tailor-made suit, and—believe me, girl, I'd rather sell my Death Valley—borax-claim than—work them myself. Free-milling gold—catch it on amalgamating plates—contact between andesite and—Silurian limestone—Billy knows ducks. I taught him myself. Come, Neddy. All together now, you old—pelican. A little close harmony, boys:

"Let go the peak halyards,
Let go the peak halyards,
My finger is caught in the block!
Leggo!"

"Sounds like a drinking man," the doctor observed. "If that's the case, this attack will go hard with him."

It did. However, life had the habit of going hard with Webster so frequently that fortunately he was trained to the minute, and after three days of heroic battling, the doctor awarded Jack the decision. Thereafter they kept him in the hospital ten days longer, "feeding him up" as the patient expressed it—at the end of which period Webster, some fifteen pounds lighter and not quite so

fast on his feet as formerly, resumed his journey toward New Orleans.

IN the meantime, however, several things had happened. To begin, Dolores Ruey spent two days wondering what had become of her quondam knight of the whiskers—at the end of which period she arrived in New Orleans with the conviction strong upon her that while her hero might be as courageous as a wounded lion when dealing with men, he was the possessor, when dealing with women, of about two per cent less courage than a cottontail rabbit. She reproached herself for the wintry glance she had cast upon the poor fellow that night at the Denver railway station; she decided that the amazing Neddy Jerome was an interfering, impudent old fool and that she had done an unmaidenly and brazen deed in replying to his ridiculous telegram, even though she did so under an assumed name. Being a very human young lady, however, she could not help wondering what had become of the ubiquitous Mr. Webster, although the fact that he had mysteriously disappeared from the train en route to New Orleans did not perturb her one-half so much as it had the disappearer! She had this advantage over that unfortunate man. Whereas he did not know she was bound for Buenaventura, she knew he was; hence, upon arrival in New Orleans she dismissed him from her thoughts, serene in an abiding faith that sooner or later her knight would appear, like little *Bo-Peep's* lost sheep, dragging his tail behind him, so to speak. The only regret she entertained arose from her disappointment in the knowledge of his real character, and its wide variance from the heroic attributes with which she had endowed him. She had depended upon him to be a daring devil—and he had failed to toe the scratch!

Dolores spent a week in New Orleans,

renewing schoolgirl friendships from her convent days in the quaint old town. This stop-over, together with the one in Denver, not having been taken into consideration by Mr. William Geary when he and Mother Jenks commenced to speculate upon the approximate date of her arrival in Buenaventura, resulted in the premature flight of Mother Jenks to San Miguel de Padua, a fruitless visit on the part of Billy aboard the *Cacique*, of the United Fruit Company's line, followed by a hurry call to Mother Jenks to return to Buenaventura until the arrival of the next steamer.

This time Billy's calculations proved correct, for Dolores did arrive on that steamer. It is also worthy of remark here that shortly after boarding the vessel and while *La Estrellita* was snoring down the Mississippi, Miss Dolores did the missing Webster the signal honor of scanning the purser's passenger-list in a vain search for his name.

At Buenaventura the steamer anchored in the roadstead; the port doctor came aboard, partook of his customary drink with the captain, received a bundle of the latest American newspapers and magazines, nosed around, asked a few perfunctory questions and gave the vessel pratique. Immediately she was surrounded by lighters manned by clamorous, half-naked Sobranteans, each screaming in a horrible patois of English, Spanish and good American slang perfervid praises of the excellence of his service compared with that of his neighbor. Dolores was particularly interested in the antics of one fellow who had a sign tacked on a short signal mast in his lighter. "I am a poor man with a large family, and my father was an American," the legend ran. "Kind-hearted Americans will patronize me to the exclusion of all others."

Dolores had made up her mind to heed this pathetic appeal, when she observed a gasoline launch shoot up to the landing at the foot of the companion-ladder and discharge a well-dressed, youthful white man. As he came up the companion, the purser recognized him.

"Howdy, Bill," he called.

"Hello yourself," Mr. William Geary replied, and Dolores knew him for an

American. "Do you happen to have as a passenger this trip a large, interesting person, by name John Stuart Webster?" added Billy Geary.

"I don't know, Billy. I'll look over the passenger-list."

"No hope," Billy replied mournfully.

"If Jack Webster was aboard he'd have got acquainted with you. However, take a look-see to make certain."

"Friend of yours?" the purser queried.

"You bet. Likewise guide and philosopher. He should have been here on the last steamer—cabled me he was coming, and I haven't heard a word from him since. I'm a little worried."

"I'll get the list," the purser announced, and together they moved off toward his office. Dolores followed, drawn by the mention of that magic name Webster, and paused in front of the purser's office to lean over the rail, ostensibly to watch the *cargadores* in their lighters clustering around the great ship, but in reality to learn more of the mysterious Webster.

"Blast the luck," Billy Geary growled, "the old sinner isn't here. Gosh, that's worse than having a note called on a fellow. By the way, do you happen to have a Miss Dolores Ruey aboard?"

Dolores pricked up her little ears. What possible interest could this stranger have in her goings or comings?

"You picked a winner this time, Bill," she heard the purser say. "Stateroom Sixteen, boat-deck, starboard side. You'll probably find her there, packing to go ashore."

"Thanks," Billy replied and stepped out of the purser's office. Dolores turned and faced him.

"I am Miss Ruey," she announced. "I heard you asking for me." Her eyes carried the query she had not put into words: "Who are you, and what do you want?" Billy saw and understood, and on the instant a wave of desolation surged over him.

SO this was the vision he had volunteered to meet aboard *La Estrellita*, and by specious lie and hypocritical mien, turn her back from the portals of Buenaventura to that dear old United States, which, Billy suddenly recalled

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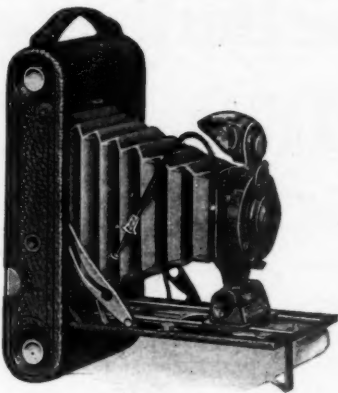
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with poignant pain, is a sizable country in which a young lady may very readily be lost forever. At the moment it occurred to Mr. Geary that the apotheosis of rapture would be a midnight stroll in the moonlight along the Malecon, with the little waves from the Caribbean lapping and gurgling against the beach, while afar, in some bosky retreat, a harp with a flute obbligato sobbed out "'Nita, Juanita" or some equally heart-throb ballad. Yes, that would be quite a joyous journey—with Dolores Ruey.

Billy, with the quick eye of youth, noted that Dolores was perfectly wonderful in a white flannel skirt and jacket, white buck boots, white Panama hat with a gorgeous puggaree, a mannish little linen collar and a red four-in-hand tie. From under that white hat peeped a profusion of crinkly brown hair with a slightly reddish tinge to it; her eyes were big and brown and wide apart, with golden flecks in them; their glance met Billy's hungry gaze simply, directly and with a curiosity there was no attempt to hide. Her complexion was that peculiar shade of olive, with a warm, healthy, underlying tinge that nobody could possibly hope to describe, but which fits in so beautifully with brown eyes of a certain shade. Her nose was patrician; her beautiful short upper lip revealed the tips of two perfect, milk-white front teeth: by and large she was, Billy Geary told himself, a goddess before whom all low, worthless, ornery fellows like himself should grovel and die happy if, perchance, she might be so minded as to walk on their faces! He was aroused from his critical inventory when the houri spoke again:

"You haven't answered my question, sir!"

"No," said Billy, "I didn't. Stupid of me, too. I was staring, instead—because, you see, it isn't often we poor expatriated devils down here climb out of Hades long enough to view the angels! However, come to think of it, you didn't ask me any question. You looked it. My name is Geary—William H. Geary, by profession a mining engineer and by nature an ignoramus, and I have called to deliver some disappointing news regarding Henrietta Wilkins."

"Is she—"

"She is. Very much alive and in excellent health—or rather was, the last time it was my pleasure and privilege to call on the dear lady. But she isn't in Buenaventura now." Mentally Billy asked God to forgive him his black-hearted treachery to this winsome girl. He loathed the task he had planned and foisted upon himself, and nothing but the memory of Mother Jenks' manifold kindnesses to him in a day, thanks to Jack Webster, now happily behind him, could have induced him to go through to the finish. Mentally clinging to the memory of his obligations to Mother Jenks, Billy ruthlessly smothered his finer instincts and with breaking heart prepared to do or die.

"Why, where is she?" Dolores queried, and Billy could have wept at the fright in those lovely brown eyes.

He waved his hand airily. "*Quien sabe?*" he said. "She left three weeks ago for New Orleans to visit you. I dare say you passed each other on the road—here, here, Miss Ruey, don't cry. By golly, this is a tough one, I know, but be brave and we'll save something out of the wreck yet."

HE took a recess of three minutes, while Dolores dabbed her eyes and went through sundry other motions of being brave. Then he proceeded with his nefarious recital.

"When your cablegram arrived, Miss Ruey, naturally Mrs. Wilkins was not here to receive it, and as I was the only person who had her address, the cable-agent referred it to me. Under the circumstances, not knowing where I could reach you with a cable informing you that Mrs. Wilkins was headed for California to see you, I had no other alternative but let matters take their course. I decided you might arrive on *La Estrellita*, so I called to welcome you to our thriving little city and, as a friend of about two minutes' standing, to warn you away from it."

Billy's mien, as he voiced this warning, was so singularly mysterious that Dolores' curiosity was aroused instantly and rose superior to her grief. "Why, what's the matter?" she demanded.

Billy looked around, as if fearful of being overheard. He lowered his voice. "We're going to have one grand little first-class revolution," he replied. "It's due to bust almost any night now, and when it does, the streets of San Buenaventura will run red with blood. I shudder to think of the fate that might befall you, alone and unprotected in the city, in such event."

Dolores blanched. "Oh, dearie me," she quavered. "Do they still have revolutions here? You know, Mr. Geary, my poor father was killed in one."

"Yes, and the same old political gang that shot him is still on deck," Billy warned her. "It would be highly dangerous for a Ruey, man or woman, to show his or her nose around Buenaventura about now. Besides, Miss Ruey, that isn't the worst," he continued, for a whole-hearted lad was Billy, who never did anything by halves. While he was opposed to lies and liars on broad, general principles, nevertheless whenever the exigencies of circumstance compelled him to backslide, his Hibernian impulsiveness bade him spin a yarn worth while. "The city is reeking with cholera," he declared.

"Cholera!" Dolores' big brown eyes grew bigger with wonder and concern. "Are there any other fatal diseases prevalent, Mr. Geary?"

"Well, we're not advertising it, Miss Ruey, but if I had an enemy to whom I wanted to slip a plain or fancy case of bubonic plague, I'd invite him to visit me at Buenaventura."

"How strange the port authorities didn't warn us at New Orleans!" Dolores suggested.

"Tish! Tush! Fiddlesticks and then some. The fruit-company censors everything, Miss Ruey, and the news doesn't get out. The port authorities here would never admit the truth of such reports, because it would be bad for business—"

"But the port doctor just said the passengers could go ashore."

"What's a human life to a doctor? Besides, he's on the slush-fund pay-roll and does whatever the higher-ups tell him. You be guided by what I tell you, Miss Ruey, and do not set foot on So-brantean soil. Even if you had a guar-

antee that you could escape alive, there isn't a hotel in the city you could afford to sleep in; Miss Wilkins' house is closed up, and Miss Wilkins' servants dismissed and—er—well, if you stay aboard *La Estrellita*, you'll have your nice clean stateroom, your well-cooked meals, your bath and the attentions of the stewardess. The steamer will be loaded in two days; then you go back to New Orleans, and by the time you arrive there I'll have been in communication by cable with Mother Jenks—I mean—"

"Mother who?" Dolores demanded.

"A mere slip of the tongue, Miss Ruey. I was thinking of my landlady. I meant Mrs. Wilkins—"

"You mean Miss Wilkins," Dolores corrected him smilingly.

"So I do. Of course, Miss Wilkins. Well, I'll cable her you're on your way back, and if you'll leave me your New Orleans address, I'll have her get in touch with you, and then you can have your nice little visit far from the maddening crowd's ignoble strife and the death-dealing sting of the yellow-fever mosquito."

"I'm so awfully obliged to you, Mr. Geary. You're so kind, I'm sure I'd be a most ungrateful girl not to be guided by you accordingly. You wouldn't risk any friend of yours in this terrible place, would you, Mr. Geary?"

"Indeed, I would not. By permitting anybody I thought anything of to come to this city, I should feel guilty of murder."

"I'm sure you would, Mr. Geary. Nevertheless, there is one point that is not quite clear in my mind, and I wish you'd explain—"

"Command me, Miss Ruey."


"If this is such a frightful place, why are you so anxious, if I may employ such language, to hornswoggle your dearest friend, Mr. John S. Webster, into coming down here. Do you want to kill him and get his money—or what?"

Billy's face flamed at thought of the embarrassing trap his glib tongue had lead him into. He cursed himself for a star-spangled jackass, and while he was engaged in this interesting pastime Dolores spoke again.

"And by the way, which is it? Miss

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Wilkins or Mrs.? You've called her both, and when I reminded you she was a Miss, you agreed with me, whereas she is nothing of the sort. She's a Mrs. Then you blurted out something about a Mother Jenks, and finally, Mr. Geary, it occurs to me that for a complete stranger you are unduly interested in my welfare. I'm not such a goose as to assimilate your weird tales of death from disease. I might have accepted the revolution, because I know it's the national outdoor sport down here, and I might have accepted the cholera, because it wouldn't surprise me; but when you so artlessly throw in bubonic plague and yellow fever for good measure, Mr. Geary, you tax my credulity. It occurs to me that if your friend John S. Webster can risk Buenaventura, I can also."

"You—you know that old tarantula?" Billy gasped. "Why, I—I came out to warn him off the grass too."

DOLORES walked a step closer to

Billy and eyed him disapprovingly. "I'm so sorry I can't believe that statement," she replied. "With the exception of your tendency toward fiction, you're rather a presentable young man, too. It's really too bad, but it happens that I was standing by the companion-ladder when you came aboard and spoke to the purser; when you asked him if Mr. Webster was aboard, your face was alight with eagerness and anticipation, but when you had reason to believe he was not aboard, you looked so terribly disappointed I felt sorry for you."

"Well, of course I would have been delighted to meet the old boy," Billy began, but she interrupted him.

"Mr. Geary, you're about as reliable as a Los Angeles thermometer—and if you've ever lived in a town the main asset of which is climate, you know just how reliable you are. Now, let us understand each other, Mr. Geary: If you think I'm the kind of simple, trusting little country maid who would come within half a mile of the land of her birth and then run back home because somebody said 'Boo!' you are not nearly so intelligent as you look. I'm going ashore, if it's the last act of my life, and when I get there I'm going to interview the

cable-agent; then I'm going to call at the steamship office and scan the passenger-list of the last three north-bound steamers, and if I do not find Henrietta Wilkins' name on one of those passenger-lists I'm going up to Calle de Concordia Number Nineteen—"

"I surrender unconditionally," groaned Billy. "I'm a liar from beginning to end. I overlooked my hand. I forgot that while you were born in this country and bred from several generations of Sobranteans, you were raised in the U. S. A. I beg of you to believe me, however, when I tell you that I only told you those whoppers because I was in honor bound to tell them. Personally, I don't want you to go away—at least, not until I'm ready to go away too! Miss Ruey, my nose is in the dust. On my lying head there is a ton of ashes and a thousand running yards of sackcloth. There is a fever in my brain and a misery in my heart—"

"And contrition in your face," she interrupted him laughingly. "You're forgiven, Mr. Geary—on one condition."

"Name it," he answered.

"Tell me everything from beginning to end."

So Billy told her, for there are some women in this world to whom a man with a poker face, the imagination of a Verne and the histrionic art of an Irving cannot—nay, dare not—tell a lie. "I would much rather have been visited with a plague of boils, like our old friend, the late Job, than have to tell you this, Miss Ruey," Bill concluded his recital. "Man proposes, but God disposes, and you're here and bound to learn the truth sooner or later. Mother isn't a lady and she knows it, but take it from me, Miss Ruey, she's a grand old piece of work. She's a scout—a ring-tailed sport—a regular individual and game as a gander."

"In other words," Dolores replied smilingly, "she has a heart of gold."

"Twenty-four carat, all wool and a yard wide," Billy declared, mixed-metaphorically.

"And I mustn't call at El Buen Amigo, Mr. Geary?"

"Perish the thought! Mother must call on you. El Buen Amigo is what



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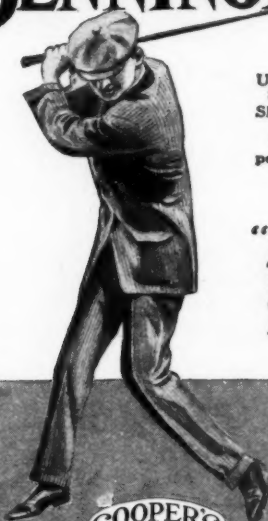
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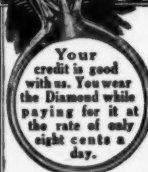
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you might term a hotel for tropical tramps of the masculine sex. Nearly all of Mother's guests have a past, you know. They're the submerged white tenth of Sobrante."

"Then my benefactor must call to see me here?" Billy nodded. "When will you bring her here?"

Billy reflected that Mother Jenks had been up rather late the night before and that trade in the *cantina* of El Buen Amigo had been unusually brisk; so, since he desired to exhibit the old lady at her best, he concluded it might be well to spar for wind.

"To-morrow at ten," he declared. Dolores inclined her head. Something told her she had better leave all future details to the amiable William.

"I take it you are a guest at El Buen Amigo, Mr. Geary," she continued.

"Oh, yes. I've been a guest for about two weeks now; before that I was an encumbrance. Now I'm paying my way—thanks to an old side-kicker of mine, Jack Webster."

"But surely you're not a tropical tramp, Mr. Geary?"

"I was, but Jack Webster reformed me," Billy answered quizzically. "You know—power of wealth and all that."

"I remember you inquired for your friend Mr. Webster when you came aboard the steamer."

"I remember it too," Billy countered ruefully. "I can't imagine what's become of him. I suppose I'll have a cable from him any day, though, telling me he'll be along on the next steamer. Miss Ruey, did you ever go to meet the only human being in the world and discover that for some mysterious reason he had failed to keep the appointment? If you ever have, you'll know just how cheerful I felt when I didn't find Jack's name on the passenger-list. Miss Ruey, you'll have to meet old John Stuart the minute he lights in Buenaventura. He's some boy."

"Old John Stuart?" she queried. "How old?"

"Oh, thirty-nine or forty on actual count, but one of the kind that will live to be a thousand and then have to be killed with an ax. He's coming to Sobrante to help me put over a mining deal."

"How interesting, Mr. Geary! No wonder you were disappointed."

THE last sentence was a shaft deliberately launched; to Dolores' delight it made a keyhole in Billy Geary's heart. "Don't get me wrong, Miss Ruey," he hastened to assure her. "I have a good mine, but I'd trade it for a handshake from Jack! The good Lord only published one edition of Jack, and limited the edition to one volume; then the plates were melted for the junk we call the human race."

"Oh, do tell me all about him," Dolores pleaded. Billy, always interested in his favorite topic, beamed with boyish pleasure. "No," he said, "I'll not tell you about him, Miss Ruey. I'll just let him speak for himself. We used to be as close to each other as peas in a pod, back in Colorado, and then I made a monkey of myself and shook old Jack without even saying good-by. Miss Ruey, my action didn't even dent his friendship for me. Two weeks ago, when I was sick and penniless and despairing, the possessor of a concession on a fortune but without a *centavo* in my pockets to buy a banana, when I was a veritable beach-comber and existing on the charity of Mother Jenks, I managed finally to communicate with old Jack and told him where I was and what I had. There's his answer, Miss Ruey, and I'm not ashamed to say that when I got it I cried like a kid." And Billy handed her John Stuart Webster's remarkable cablegram, the receipt of which had, for Billy Geary, transformed night into day, purgatory into paradise. Dolores read it.

"No wonder you love him," she declared, and added artlessly: "His wife must simply adore him."

"He has no wife to bother his life, so he paddles his own canoe," Billy recited. "I don't believe the old sourdough has ever been in love with anything more charming than the goddess of fortune. He's woman-proof."

"About Mrs. Jenks," Dolores continued, abruptly changing the subject. "How nice to reflect that after she had trusted you and believed in you when you were penniless, you were enabled to justify her faith."

"You bet!" Billy declared. "I feel that I can never possibly hope to catch even with the old Samaritan, although I did try to show her how much I appreciated her."

"I dare say you went right out and bought her an impossible hat," Dolores challenged roguishly.

"No, I didn't—for a very sufficient reason. Down here the ladies do not wear hats. But I'll tell you what I did buy her, Miss Ruey—and oh, by George, I'm glad now I did it. She'll wear them to-morrow when I bring her to see you. I bought her a new black silk dress and an old lace collar, and a gold breast-pin and a tortoise-shell hair-comb and hired an open carriage and took her for an evening ride on the Malecon to listen to the band-concert."

"Did she like that?"

"She ate it up," Billy declared with conviction. "I think it was her first adventure in democracy."

BILLY'S pulse was still far from normal when he reached El Buen Amigo, for he was infused with a strange, new-found warmth that burned like malarial fever but wasn't. He wasted no preliminaries on Mother Jenks, but bluntly acquainted her with the facts in the case.

Mother Jenks eyed him a moment wildly. "Gord's truth!" she gasped; she reached for her favorite elixir, but Billy got the bottle first.

"Nothing doing," he warned this strange publican. "Mother, you're funk-ing it—and what would your sainted 'Enery say to that? Do you want that angel to kiss you and get a whiff of this brandy?"

Mother Jenks' eyes actually popped. "Gor', Willie," she gasped, "'aven't hi told yer she's a lydy! Me kiss the lamb! Hi trusts, Mr. Geary, as 'ow I knows my plyce an' can keep it."

"Yes, I know," Billy soothed the frightened old woman, "but the trouble is Miss Dolores doesn't know hers—and something tells me if she does, she'll forget it. She'll take you in her arms and kiss you, sure as death and taxes."

And she did! "My lamb, my lamb," sobbed Mother Jenks the next morning,

and rested her old cheek, with its rum-begotten hue, close to the rose-tinted ivory cheek of her ward. "Me—wot I am—an' to think—"

"You're a sweet old dear," Dolores whispered, patting the gray head; "and I'm going to call you Mother."

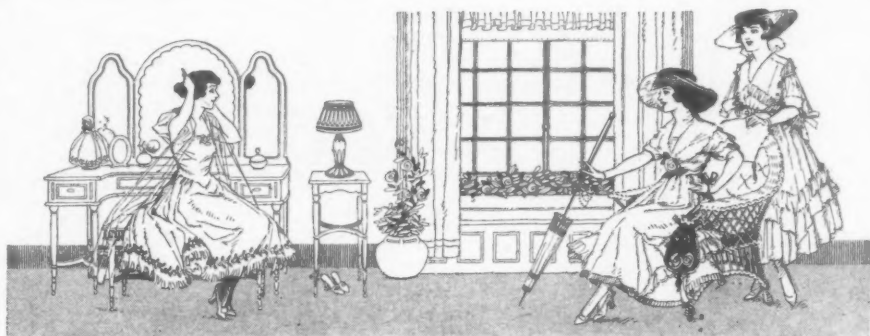
"Mr. William H. Geary," the girl remarked that night, "I know now why your friend Mr. Webster sent that cablegram. I think you're a scout too."

For reasons best known to himself Mr. Geary blushed furiously. "I—I'd better go and break the news to Mother," he suggested inanely. She held out her hand; and Billy, having been long enough in Sobrante to have acquired the habit, bent his malarial person over that hand and kissed it. As he went out, it occurred to him that had the lobby of the Hotel Mateo been paved with eggs, he must have floated over them like a wraith, so light did he feel within.

CHAPTER X

WEBSTER reached New Orleans at the end of the first leg of his journey, to discover that in the matter of sailings he was not fortunate. He was one day late to board the *Atlanta*, a banana-boat of the Consolidated Fruit Company's line, plying regularly between New Orleans and that company's depots at Limon and at Buenaventura; and this necessitated a wait of three days for the steamer *La Estrellita* of the Caribbean Mail Line, running to Caracas and way ports. The instant he had procured his transportation, however, he cabled the anxious Geary—which information descended upon that young man with something of the charm of a gentle rainfall over a hitherto arid district. He had been seeing Dolores Ruey at least once a day, ever since her return to Sobrante; indeed, only the fear that he might wear out his welcome prevented him from seeing her twice a day. He was quick, therefore, to seize upon Webster's cablegram as an excuse to call upon Dolores and explain the mystery surrounding his friend's non-appearance.

"Well, Dolores," he began, in his excitement calling her by her first name for the first time, "they say it's a long



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lane that hasn't got a saloon at the end of it. I've heard from Jack Webster."

"What's the news, Bill?" Dolores inquired. From the first day of their acquaintance she had been growing increasingly fond of Geary; for nearly a week she had been desirous of calling him Bill, which is a comfortable name and, to Dolores' way of thinking, a peculiarly appropriate cognomen for such a distinctly American young man. At mention of the beloved word he glanced down at her pleasurably.

"Thank you," he said. "I'm glad you got around to it finally. Those that love me always call me Bill."

"You called me Dolores."

"I move we make it unanimous. I'm a foe to formality."

"Second the motion, Bill. So am I—when I care to be—and in our case your formality is spoiling our comradeship. And now, with reference to the extraordinary Señor Webster—"

"Why, the poor old horse has been down with ptomaine poisoning. They carried him off the train at St. Louis and stood him on his head and pumped him out and just did manage to cancel his order for a new tombstone. He says he's feeding regularly again and has booked passage on *La Estrellita*, so we can look for him on the next steamer arriving."

"Oh, the poor fellow!" Dolores murmured—so fervently that Billy was on the point of hurling his heart at her feet on the instant.

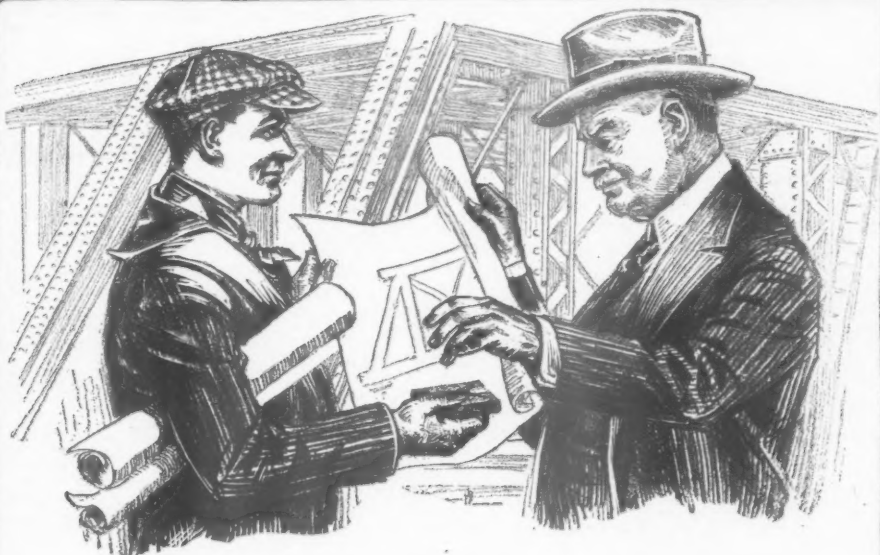
THE thousand dollars Webster had cabled Billy "for a road-stake" had been dwindling rapidly under the stimulus of one continuous opportunity to spend the same in a quarter where it was calculated to bring the most joy. The pleasures of the Sobrantean capital were not such that the average Yankee citizen might be inspired to prefer them with any degree of enthusiasm, but such as they were, Dolores Ruey had them all. In a country where the line between pure blood and mixed is drawn so strictly as it is in Sobrante, Billy Geary was, of course, a social impossibility. He was a Caucasian who would shake hands and have a drink with a gentleman whose

nails showed blue at the bases, for all his white skin—and in the limited upper-class circles of Buenaventura, where none but pure-bred descendants of pure-bred Castilians intermingled, the man or woman who failed, however slightly, to remember at all times that he was white, was distinctly persona non grata.

The first time Billy appeared in public riding in the same Victoria with Mother Jenks and Dolores, therefore, he was fully aware that for the future Dolores Ruey was like himself, socially defunct in Sobrante. However, he did not care, for he had a sneaking suspicion Dolores was as indifferent as he; in fact, he took a savage delight in the knowledge that the girl would be proscribed, for with Dolores cut off from all other society she must, of necessity, turn to him throughout her visit. So, up to the night *La Estrellita*, with John Stuart Webster on board, dropped anchor on the quarantine-ground, Mr. Geary was the unflagging ballyhoo for a personally conducted tour of Dolores Ruey's native land within a radius of fifteen miles about Buenaventura. He was absolutely bogged in the quagmire of his first love-affair, but until his mining concession should amply justify an avowal of his passion, an instinctive sense of the eternal fitness of things reminded Billy of the old proverb that a closed mouth catches no flies. And in the meantime (such is the optimism of youth) he decided there was no need for worry, for when a girl calls a fellow Bill, when she tells him he's a scout and doesn't care a whoop for any society except his—*caramba!* it's great!

A wireless from Webster warned Billy of the former's imminent arrival. Just before sunset Billy and Dolores, riding along the Malecon, sighted a blur of smoke far out to sea—a blur that grew and grew until they could make out the graceful white hull of *La Estrellita*, before the swift tropic night descended and the lights of the great vessel shimmered across the harbor.

"Too late to clear quarantine tonight," Billy mourned, as he and Dolores rode back to her hotel. "All the same, I'm going to borrow the launch of my good friend Leber and his protégé Don



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Juan Cafetéro, and go out to the steamer to-night. I can heave to a little way from the steamer and welcome the old rascal, anyhow; he'll be expecting me to do that, and I wouldn't disappoint him for a farm."

Fortunately, good little Leber consented to Billy's request, and Don Juan Cafetéro was sober enough to turn the engine over and run the launch. From the deck of the steamer Webster, smoking his post-prandial cigar, caught sight of the launch's red and green side-lights chugging through the inky blackness; as the little craft slid up to within a cable's-length of the steamer and hove to, something told Webster that Billy Geary would soon be paging him. He edged over to the rail.

"That you, Bill?" he shouted.

"Hey! Jack, old pal!" Billy's delighted voice answered him.

"I knew you'd come, Billy boy."

"I knew you'd know it, Johnny. Can't come aboard, you know, until the ship clears, but I can lie off here and say hello. How is your internal mechanism?"

"Grand. I've got the world by the tail on a downhill haul once more, son. However, your query reminds me I haven't taken the medicine the doctor warned me to take after meals for a couple of weeks. Wait a minute, Bill, until I go to my stateroom and do my duty by my stomach."

For ten minutes Billy and Don Juan Cafetéro bobbed about in the launch; then a stentorian voice shouted from the steamer. "Hey, you! In the launch, there. Not so close. Back off."

Don Juan kicked the launch back fifty feet. "That will do!" the voice called again.

"Hello!" Billy soliloquized. "That's Jack Webster's voice. I've heard him bossing a gang of miners too often not to recognize that note of command. Wonder what he's up to. I thought he acted strangely—preferring medicine to me the minute I hailed him!"

While he was considering the matter, a voice behind him said very softly and indistinctly, like a man with a hare-lip:

"Mr. Geary, will you be good enough to back your launch a couple of hundred

feet? When I'm certain I can't be seen from the steamer, I'll come aboard."

Billy turned, and in the dim light of his binnacle lamp observed a beautiful pair of white hands grasping the gunwale on the starboard quarter. He peered over and made out the head and shoulders of a man.

"All right," he replied in a low voice. "Hang where you are, and you'll be clear of the propeller."

He signaled Don Juan, who backed swiftly away, while Billy doused the binnacle lamp.

"That'll do," the thick voice said presently. "Bear a hand, friend, and I'll climb over."

HE came, as naked as Mercury, sprawled on his belly in the cockpit, opened his mouth, spat out a compact little roll of tinfoil, opened it and drew out a ball of paper which he flattened out on the floor of the cockpit and handed up to Billy.

"Thank you," he said, very courteously and distinctly now. "My credentials, Mr. Geary, if you please."

Billy re-lighted the lamp and read:

Dear Billy:

I do not know the bearer from Adam's off ox; all I know about him is that he has all the outward marks of a gentleman, the courage of a bear-cat, a sense of humor and a head for which the Presidente of Sobrante will gladly pay a considerable number of *pesos oro*. Don't give up the head, because I like it and we do not need the money—yet. Take him ashore without anybody knowing it; hide him, clothe him, feed him—then forget all about him.

Ever thine,

J. S. WEBSTER.

"Kick the boat ahead again, Caferty," Billy ordered quietly. He turned to the late arrival. "Mr. Man, your credentials are all in apple-pie order. Do you happen to know this bay is swarming with man-eating sharks?"

The man raised a fine, strong, youthful face and grinned at him. "Hobson's choice, Mr. Geary," he replied. "Afloat or ashore, the sharks are after me. Sir, I am your debtor." He crawled into the cabin and stretched out on the settee as John Stuart Webster's voice came floating across the dark waters.

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that person in any other way.

Advertising increases the keenness of competition so that prices are forced downward.

It would not be possible to produce a lead pencil for two cents, a tube of paste for ten cents, a collar for twelve and a half cents, were it not for the force of advertising in creating a wide demand, permitting quantity production and labor-saving machinery, thus cutting costs.

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This article—one of a series to Advertise Advertising—was written for the Associated Advertising Clubs of the World (headquarters Indianapolis) by

Byrd C. Green

President,
Chalmers Motor Company.

"Hey, Billy!"

"Hey, yourself!"

"Everything well with you, Billy?"

"All is lovely, Jack, and the goose honks high. By the way, that friend of yours called with his letter of introduction. I took care of him."

"Thanks. I suppose you'll call for me in that launch to-morrow morning?"

"Surest thing you know, Jack. Good night, old top."

"Good night, Billy. See you in the morning."

Don Juan Cafetéro swung the launch and headed back for the city. At Leber's little dock Billy stepped ashore, while Don Juan backed out into the dark bay again in order to avoid inquisitive visitors. Billy hastened to El Buen Amigo and returned presently with a bundle of clothes; at an agreed signal Don Juan kicked the launch into the dock again and Billy went aboard.

"Hat, shirt, necktie, duck suit, white socks and shoes," he whispered. "Climb into them, stranger."

Once more the launch backed out in the bay, where Webster's protégé dressed at his leisure, and Billy handed Don Juan a couple of pesos.

"Remember, John," he cautioned the bibulous one as they tied up for the night, "nothing unusual happened to-night."

"Devil a thing, Misther Geary. Thank you, sor," the Gaelic wreck replied blithely and disappeared in the darkness, leaving Billy to guide the stranger to El Buen Amigo, where he was taken into the confidence of Mother Jenks and, on Billy's guarantee of the board-bill, furnished with a room and left to his own devices.

JOHN STUART WEBSTER came down the gangplank into Leber's launch hard on the heels of the port doctor.

"You young horse-thief," he cried affectionately. "I believe it's the custom down this way for men to kiss each other. We'll dispense with that, but by—" He folded Billy in a paternal embrace, then held him at arm's-length and looked him over.

"Lord, son," he said, "you're as thin as a snake. I'll have to feed you up."

As they sped toward the landing, he looked Billy over once more. "I have it," he declared. "You need a change of climate to get rid of that malaria. Just show me this little old mining-claim of yours, Bill, and then hike for God's country. Three months up there will put you right again, and by the time you get back, we'll be about ready to weigh the first clean-up."

Billy shook his head. "I'd like to mighty well, Jack," he replied, "but I just can't."

"Huh! I suppose you don't think I'm equal to the task of straightening out this concession of yours and making a hummer out of it, eh?"

The young fellow looked across at him sheepishly. "Mine?" he jeered. "Who's talking about a mine. I'm thinking of a girl!"

"Oh!"

"Some girl, Johnny."

"I hope she's not some parrakeet." Webster bantered. "Have you looked up her pedigree?"

"Ah-h-h!" Billy spat over the side in sheer disgust. "This is an American girl—born here, but white—raised in the U. S. A. I've only known her three weeks, but—ah!" And Billy kissed his hand into space.

"Well, I'm glad I find you so happy, boy. I suppose you're going to let your old Jack-partner give her the once-over and render his report before you make the fatal leap—eh?"

"Sure! I want you to meet her. I've been telling her all about you, and she's crazy to meet you."

"Good news! I had a good friend once—twice—three times—and lost him every time. Wives get so suspicious of their husband's single friends, you know, so I hope I make a hit with your heart's desire, Billy. When do you pull off the wedding?"

"Oh," said Billy, "that's premature, Jack. I haven't asked her. How could I until I'm able to support her?"

"Look here, son," Webster replied, "don't you go to work and be the kind of fool I was. You get married and take a chance. If you do, you'll have a son sprouting into manhood when you're as old as I. A man ought to marry young,

Bill. Hang the odds. I know what's good for you."

At the hotel, while Webster shaved and arrayed himself in an immaculate white-duck suit, with a broad black silk belt, buck shoes and a Panama hat, Billy sent a note to Dolores, apprising her that John Stuart Webster had arrived—and would she be good enough to receive them?

Miss Ruey would be that gracious. She was waiting for them in the veranda just off the *patio*, outwardly calm, but inwardly a foment of conflicting emotions. As they approached she affected not to see them and turning, glanced in the opposite direction; nor did she move her head until Billy's voice, speaking at her elbow, said:

"Well, Dolores, here's my old Jack-partner waiting to be introduced. Jack, permit me to present Miss Dolores Ruey."

She turned her face and rose gracefully, marking with secret triumph the light of recognition that leaped to his eyes, hovered there the hundredth part of a second and departed, leaving those keen, quizzical blue orbs appraising her in the most natural manner imaginable. Webster bowed.

"It is a great happiness to meet you, Miss Ruey," he said gravely.

Dolores gave him her hand. "You have doubtless forgotten, Mr. Webster, but I think we have met before."

"Indeed!" John Stuart Webster murmured interestedly. "So stupid of me not to remember. Where did we meet?"

"He has a profound sense of humor," she soliloquized. "He's going to force me into the open. Oh, dear, I'm helpless." Aloud she said: "On the train in Death Valley last month, Mr. Webster. You came aboard with whiskers."

Webster shook his head slowly, as if mystified. "I fear you're mistaken, Miss Ruey. I cannot recall the meeting, and if I ever wore whiskers, no human being would ever be able to recognize me without them. Besides, I wasn't on the train in Death Valley last month. I was in Denver—so you must have met some other Mr. Webster."

She flushed furiously. "I didn't think I could be mistaken," she answered a trifle coldly.

"It is my misfortune that you were," he replied graciously. "Certainly, had we met at that time, I should not have failed to recognize you now. Somehow, Miss Ruey, I never have any luck."

She was completely outgeneraled, and having the good sense to realize it, submitted gracefully. "He's perfectly horrible," she told herself, "but at least he can lie like a gentleman—and I always did like that kind of man."

SO they chatted on the veranda until luncheon was announced and Dolores left them to go to her room.

"Well?" Billy queried the moment she was out of earshot. "What do you think, Johnny?"

"I think," said John Stuart Webster slowly, "that you're a good picker, Bill. She's my ideal of a fine young woman, and my advice to you is to marry her. I'll grub-stake you. Bill, this stiff collar is choking me; I wish you'd wait here while I go to my room and rustle up a soft one."

In the privacy of his room John Stuart Webster sat down on his bed and held his head in his hands, for he had just received a blow in the solar plexus and was still groggy; there was an ache in his head, and the quizzical light had faded from his eyes. Presently, however, he pulled himself together and approaching the mirror looked long at his weather-beaten countenance.

"Too old," he murmured, "too old to be dreaming dreams."

He changed to a soft collar, and when he descended to the *patio* to join Billy once more he was, to all outward appearances, his usual unperturbed self, for his was one of those rare natures that can derive a certain comfort from the misery of self-sacrifice—and in that five minutes alone in his room, John Stuart Webster had wrestled with the tragedy of his life and won.

He had resolved to give Billy the right of way on the highway to happiness.

You will find the next installment of Mr. Kyne's absorbing story in the October Red Book Magazine, on the news-stands September 23rd.

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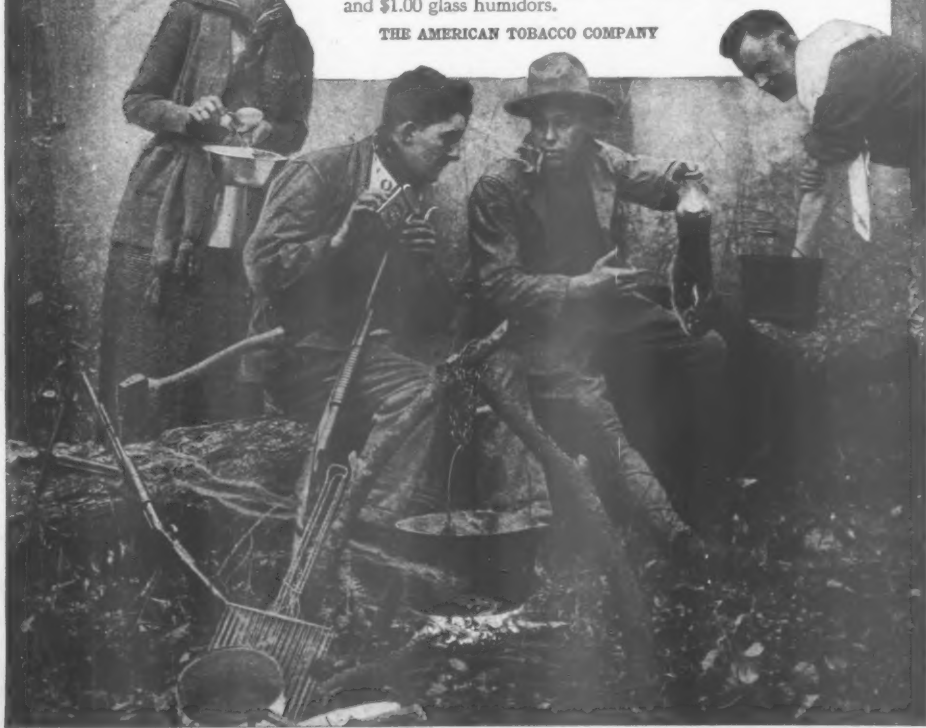
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